

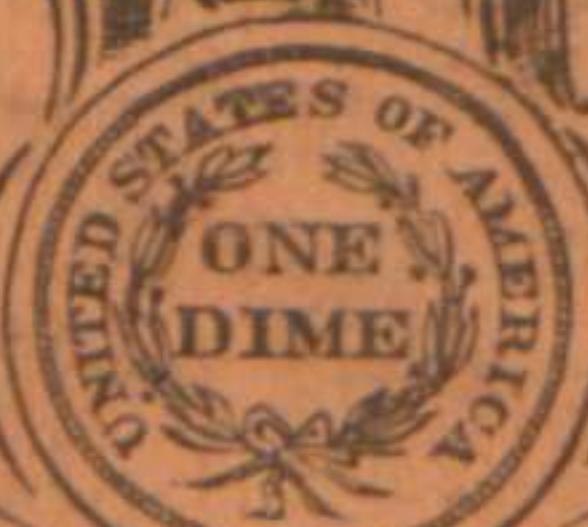
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OR,

'COURTING' IN KENTUCKY.

BY MRS. M. V. VICTOR,
AUTHOR OF "THE GOLD HUNTERS," "MAUM GUINEA," ETC.

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JO DAVIESS' CLIENT.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE OR DEATH.

THEY were trying the prisoner for horse-stealing. The penalty, if convicted, was death. The court-room was a log-house, not much larger than a good-sized pig-pen, whose legitimate use was for a school, but this being Saturday, it had been seized upon for the purposes of the law. It stood deep in the wilderness, by the side of a road so little traveled that the grass grew in the middle of it. Judge Lynch was the judge who presided upon this occasion in the guise of a stalwart farmer in a red hunting-shirt and leather trowsers, who had been chosen to fill that position on account of his reputation for learning in law matters, as well as for possessing intelligence and reasoning powers which made him much respected by his neighbors. The jury was composed of a rough-looking set of men, nearly all of them with knives in their belts—used at present for cutting huge quids of tobacco—who presented an appearance of hunter, farmer and horse-jockey commingled. The spectators, who crowded the small room and thronged the windows outside, were of the same class—a reckless and determined set of men, who showed their displeasure and their resolve to be revenged in every flash of their eyes and growl of their rude speech. The prisoner was a young man not over twenty-two, of a slight figure and agreeable face. He was very pale, an expression of scorn curling his lips; his eyes shone like blazing stars from beneath their half-drooped lashes; his face, though white with excitement, boldly confronted the savage looks of those who surrounded him.

The audience seemed generally to have made up its mind that he was guilty. As his chief accuser went on with the evidence, mutterings of wrath were heard mingled with oaths of vengeance. The crime of horse-stealing rivaled that of murder in that half-civilized community. And, in fact, the people had been long-suffering and terribly provoked. Horse-thieves usually belonged to a systematized gang; and did not confine themselves to this one offense; they were dangerous and devilish rascals, ready for robbery, murder, and all manner of

wickedness. These gangs were thoroughly organized and widely extended; their depredations were too outrageous to be borne; the settlers had sworn to root them out. In the attempt to do this, their investigations had led to curious results—men of high standing in their various communities, who lived quietly in their midst, never suspected of evil-doing, were not unfrequently found to have been among the worst offenders. Lawyers, hotel-keepers, farmers, doctors and ministers had had their iniquities brought to light.

Thus it was that when William Wood came to be arrested for a very aggravated theft of a splendid pair of gray carriage horses belonging to Squire Ringgold, only a momentary surprise was felt; people crowded to his swift and irregular trial, expecting him to be convicted as a matter of course. No one in this Bourbon county settlement had borne a more irreproachable character; he was the son of a Methodist minister, who, dying several years before, had left him—a delicate, studious boy, very different from the people about him—to provide for his widowed mother—a labor of love which he had performed with the most filial devotion.

About five months before the day on which his trial took place, he had "hired out" to Squire Ringgold, who was among the wealthiest settlers in the county, as a farm hand. In the winter he was to teach school, as he had done the previous season. The squire had praised him as a model of industry, honesty and ambition, "a young man who'd make his own way, and a good way too, and no thanks to nobody. He did more work 'n anybody else, though he wasn't half as stout; and what he done was always done keerful and right." His pretty daughter Sallie had heard these praises and had confirmed them all in her own heart.

She was present now "in court," having been summoned as a witness. She sat on the very little bench where she had sat, "the favorite scholar," through the happy three months of the winter district-school. The only other woman present was the prisoner's mother, who rushed to his side on hearing of his arrest the previous night, and had refused to leave him for a moment; yet who could make no effort in his behalf, do nothing to save him from the abyss at his feet—only to gild it with the one ray of her unfaltering devotion.

His principal accuser was Dan Smith, as he was familiarly called, also a young man but a few years older than Will, and a frequent visitor at Squire Ringgold's. As he stood up, giving his testimony with great emphasis and appearance of proper indignation, a close observer might have noticed that he did not turn his eyes upon the accused, nor care to meet that steady, blazing look, whose fire he must have felt; for, despite his

earnestness, he was ill at ease. His dark complexion, restless, glittering eye, and slender figure gave him some resemblance to an Indian; it was the general belief that Indian blood ran, not very remotely, in his veins; though his family was now one of the F. F.'s of Kentucky in some of its branches. He, himself, was a well-to-do person, half-trader, half-merchant—who was now engaged in riding about the country, buying up what was to sell in almost any line, and having a commission store in a flourishing town further down the river.

Among the lookers-on who had nothing specially to do with the case, but had been drawn there by curiosity, was one, a stranger to all the others. Passing by on horseback—the favorite method of travel in those days—and seeing the crowd, he had tied his animal to a tree across the way, and stepping up and leaning against the doorway, in such a position as to command a view of all within, he listened attentively. He was a very tall and powerful man, dressed in hunter's costume, with his rifle slung over his shoulder; something striking in the expression of his face, with the easy grace of his attitude, made many glance at him; but interest in the trial soon withdrew their attention.

The substance of Dan Smith's statements was, that the night-before-last he had been visiting at Squire Ringgold's and had stayed rather late—say twelve o'clock—(here both Sallie and the prisoner blushed violently,) and that, as he was going out the gate, after leaving the house—he went out the back gate and across the orchard, as it saved him a mile's walk—he observed some one sitting on the fence, close by the bars which lead into the lane, and which were down. The person, hearing him, slid down into the shadow of the fence. It was not light enough for him to make out who it was. He then saw that the stable was open and that the horses stood in the lane. Thinking something was wrong, he called out, and receiving no answer was about to alarm the family, when Will Wood spoke out and told him not to be uneasy—that it was him—that he had taken the horses to the village to have them shod, and getting into good company had stayed the evening, and was now just returning home. Knowing his excellent character, and that he had been in the employ of the squire for some time, he took the story for granted, and went on his way thinking no more about it, until he heard, the next day, that the horses were gone, when the true state of affairs flashed over him. He added that he had recently heard rumors derogatory to the character of the accused, but knew of no facts that he could swear to.

Squire Ringgold affirmed that the horses had not been taken to the village to be shod; that Will Wood was in the kitchen the early part of the evening; that he had the key to the stable

that the door of the stable was not broken open but unlocked with the key, which was found in the lock; that Will was out all night, the time the horses were stolen, and that his manner, the next day, had been moody, embarrassed and suspicious—he added, moreover, that the animals taken were spirited creatures who would not have left the stable, but at the bidding of some one with whom they were familiar.

At this point Daniel Smith volunteered the information that this statement was correct—he knew the horses very well, as the squire had purchased them of his uncle in Lexington, and that they never obeyed a voice unless they were acquainted with it.

Sallie Ringgold was next called upon to testify. Her father had compelled her attendance, she being the one who had heard Will's late return, at the time spoken of, and who had inadvertently mentioned it, before he was accused. She gave one mournful look at the prisoner, as, pale and trembling, she stood up, answering the questions put to her in a low, unwilling voice. They extorted from her confirmation of the time of Daniel Smith's leaving the house; that he had said he should go by the orchard way, and that she heard William going to his room at five o'clock of the next morning.

"But I do not believe he is guilty," she concluded, firmly; an addition to her testimony which caused her father to frown, Dan Smith to bite his lips, and the prisoner to flash upon her a quick smile. She could have given a reason for his abstracted and unusual manner of yesterday: and she was sorry that she had not done it, despite of maidenly diffidence, when she saw the dark glances lowering upon him.

It was concluded by all that the youth had ~~ridden~~ the horses a few miles and passed them over to accomplices, who had hurried them out of the State. Oaths and threatening gestures were illy suppressed. The accused had employed no one to defend him; but rose, when called upon, and stated, in a plain, unembarrassed manner, that he knew not, though he could guess, the motive that Daniel Smith had for persecuting him; that he had *not* met and spoken to him on the night in question; that he had been out, that night, from ten o'clock until five, hunting for raccoons; that the key had been stolen from the pocket of his jacket, which he had exchanged for a warmer one, and hung, thoughtlessly, upon the fence, between the lane and orchard.

This defense was ridiculed. The excitement of the rough crowd grew nearly uncontrollable; it could hardly wait for the idle ceremony of the verdict of the jury. "Guilty," of course, that verdict would be. They wanted an example. Their losses had been frequent and most annoying; they were resolved

upon such summary punishment as should frighten all similar scoundrels from that part of the country. There is nothing more terrible on the face of the earth than a mob of human beings, whose passions are all urging them in one direction. The lightning of heaven is not so dreadful as their eyes; the roar of the tempest approaching not so awful as the gradual uprise of their hoarse voices.

The young man, white as snow, and outwardly as calm, sat there facing the terrible tribunal, scarcely heeding the groans of the distracted mother. It was as beautiful an October day as ever shone. His eye wandered over the pitiless human faces, out upon the green grass, the blue sky, the twinkling stream, the waving branches of the trees, bright with the first frost, crimson and gold, swinging against the pure azure of the heavens. Eagerly his glance drank in this beauty, as, with the thought that in a few more moments—he shuddered, for, courageous as he was, he could not repress that cold shudder, as he caught sight of the stout, new rope, dangling from the limb of a tree in front of the door. Summary, indeed, was the justice of those times! Not one person, save the two women, seemed to feel an emotion of relenting toward the fellow-being, so boyish, so innocent-looking, sitting there by his old mother, with blanching cheeks, eyes clear and blue as the ether above, and brown hair floating back in almost girlish tresses from his forehead. As the shudder ended, he turned his gaze from that significant horror without, to the eyes of Sallie Ringgold. Even in that awful moment his heart thrilled at the love, the anguish he saw there. Great tears rolled down her cheeks; she made no effort to get out of the crowd, and paid no attention to her father's beckoning hand.

The twelve jurymen rose to go outside.

"Don't be long," grumbled one of the spectators. "We're gettin' hungry, and we want to finish up this business before we get our dinners."

It was evident that the impatience of the crowd would not brook much delay; restless fingers fidgeted with hilts of knives at many a belt.

The old mother looked at the man who had spoken, with a wild, incredulous expression. These men were hungry—they wanted their dinners—but first they wanted the life of her boy! She would cook no more dinners for him; they would go away, but he—

Suddenly the stranger, who stood by the door, strode, in two steps, before the judge, and commanded the retiring jury to wait—he offered himself counsel for the prisoner. There was a growl of disappointment; but something in the air of the speaker commanded the passions of his hearers. All the

proceedings of the trial had been irregular and self-constituted—enacted by what has since, under similar circumstances, been called a 'Vigilance' Committee—and it was conceded to the stranger to be allowed his way.

He asked the young girl if she did not believe that it was the fact of her entertaining Daniel Smith until so late an hour which had driven the accused to the woods. She blushed crimson, but answered firmly :

" William Wood asked me to give him my company that evening, as he had something special to say to me; and I told him that I was already engaged to spend the evening with Daniel Smith."

" And Daniel Smith proposed to you, and you rejected him?"

" Yes."

" And William Wood, not knowing your decision, was distraught next day?"

For an instant the eyes of the two lovers met.

" I believe it," she replied, with another deeper blush.

Then turning to Smith, he asked him, rapidly, a series of questions, so skillfully and suddenly put, that the witness grew tangled in the meshes of his own weaving, stumbled about in his evidence, contradicted himself, growing constantly more embarrassed and guilty-looking.

Then the stranger, having shaken the confidence of every listener in the veracity of the principal witness, making him convict himself of falsehood, began to speak, showing the malicious intent of the witness, the improbable character of his testimony. A profound silence took the place of the dissatisfied murmur. The eyes of judge, jury and audience were fixed upon this unexpected invader of the scene, who seemed to them to tower up as he spoke, until the little room was not high enough to contain him. This effect upon their uncultured minds was produced by his intense personality; he seemed to fill the space, and the fire of his eye cast a new light upon every subject over which it flashed.

" Is the prisoner a fool?" he asked. " Yet who, but an idiot, would have made himself known to the witness so unnecessarily, when, upon the discovery of the theft, his evidence would of course be given? Who, but an idiot, would have left the key in the lock, if it was indeed the keeper of it who left it there? Who, but a fool, would do these things, then stay quietly at home, to be arrested and hung from the nearest tree? Your prejudices have run away with your good sense, my friends. It is a terrible thing to kindle the spark of anger for the destruction of the innocent. Who among you could ever again lift an honest face to God's blue sky, if, after your

vengeance was sated upon this poor boy, you learned that you had hurried him into eternity, when he was as guiltless as your own little children? What reparation could you make then to this weeping old mother? What reparation could you make to *him*, taken away from this beautiful earth, this sunshine and bright day, which we all feel is so pleasant? Will you twelve men dare to take upon your souls this responsibility, in haste, with passion, without conclusive evidence? I have shown you the lying character of that evidence—the selfish *motive* which prompted it. Now I ask you to reflect upon the circumstances. The horses would not leave the stable except at the order of a familiar voice; Daniel Smith, in his over-zeal, has asserted that they were well acquainted with *him*. Yes! as the prisoner says, that key was stolen from the pocket of his jacket; and the person who found the jacket, at midnight, upon the orchard-fence, and improved the opportunity for his own profit and revenge upon a rival—who took the key from the pocket and used it, need I say who that person must be?"

All eyes followed his own to the face of Daniel Smith, now livid with conscious guilt beneath their penetrating gaze. The stupidest among them could read his fear and anger at the tables thus turned upon himself. The long fore-finger of the right hand of the speaker was slowly raised and pointed at him, saying, more forcibly than words, "Thou art the man!"

The guilty man made a slight, uneasy movement, looking furtively at the windows and door. The sharp glance of his accuser read his intention.

"Arrest the scoundrel!" thundered the commanding voice.

Three or four strong hands were reached forth from the throng close to him; but he was too quick for them. The stranger, upon coming forward to speak, had rested his rifle against the side of the cabin near the door. With a bound like that of a panther, Dan Smith sprung over a bench, seized the rifle, darted out of doors, leaped upon the stranger's horse, and turning the weapon upon the nearest of his pursuers, gave an Indian yell, and plunged into a bridle-path which led off the main road into the woods.

"Well done! this pays me for meddling in other people's affairs," muttered the man whose powerful eloquence had just saved the life of a fellow-creature. "But you, young man, had better attend to your sweetheart—she's either very glad or very sorry—you'll have to ask her which."

Sallie Ringgold was indeed sinking down in a fainting-fit for the first time in her life. Will sprung forward to catch her in his arms, but the rope was still knotted about his wrists. He had been freed by acclamation; but the flight of the real villain had been so sudden that his bonds were still upon him, and he

was obliged to see another extend the necessary aid to the maiden.

"Here, boy! let me cut them strings, and beg your pardon ~~at~~ the same time. I wonder how I came to be so took in. I own I was mighty surprised at its being *you*—but there's been so many seemingly good citizens proved bad—and that black rascal had 'iled his way into my good graces."

For a moment the head of the young man swam as the rope was cut asunder by Squire Ringgold. The world—the beautiful world—looked so different to him from what it had a few moments ago; the delicious sense of life and safety thrilled his veins; that ugly, significant noose, swinging from the oak tree, did not disturb him now; and Sallie—what had overcome her so? Was it joy at his release, or grief at the discovery of the guilt of another? Then he remembered her avowal that she had rejected Dan Smith, and his cheeks grew red as a girl's.

"Heaven's choicest blessings be upon you, whoever you are," his mother was saying, through choking tears, wringing the hand of the stranger, who had given Sallie over to her father, with an admiring glance at her rich brown hair and beautiful complexion, now flushing out of its paleness as she recovered from her temporary swoon.

"Who be you, now? What's your name, squire? I'll be danged if you ain't ekill to Jo Daviess himself!" were some of the eager words addressed to him by those not already started in pursuit of the fugitive.

"I am Jo Daviess," was the simple reply, as he drew his tall form to its full height, courteously thanking the widow for her blessing.

At this avowal a shout of enthusiasm rung from the crowd. Jo Daviess was one of the favorites of Kentucky—one of her most splendid lawyers—and possessed of such brave and eccentric qualities as would make him fairly worshiped by such men as surrounded him now.

"I do not see how I am to finish my hunting-excursion in time to reach my court in Clarksville by to-morrow noon, without either rifle or horse," he remarked, with a half-smile.

"I swear you shall have both before long, if it's in the power of possibles," exclaimed a large fellow, whose belt was well stocked with pistol and knife. "Ef I can get within range of that infernal scoundrel, I shan't make any bones of using *this*," touching his pistol.

"No, nor I," added another. "Jo Daviess' horse! just think of it! it's wuss than stealing the grays! Don't take down that rope yet, squire. We'll use it to-night, unless I'm mistaken. Come on, boys; every feller as has a horse, let him mount and be off. Let us scour the woods. My pony is down to the

tavern, but I'll jine ye in less'n no time. Stop a bit, till you hear from us, Squire Daviess."

"We'll chase him till we catch him, ef it's down to Texas," added a third.

"I reckon there's enough youngsters to bag that game. S'pose you go home with me to dinner, Mr. Daviess, and wait quietly and rest yourself, till news comes of your property. Come, Sallie, be perlite to Mr. Daviess—he's done *you* a good turn, I expect."

The grateful look of those shy brown eyes was reward enough to the eminent lawyer, if he had wished any other than his own consciousness of a good deed.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHASE.

WILL WOOD felt no inclination to join in the chase after the fugitive. Not that he was deficient in courage, for he was not, as was proved by the unshaken spirit he had displayed during his summary trial; but there was nothing revengeful in his generous nature, and he had escaped too recently from awful peril to wish to place even his bitterest enemy in similar circumstances. His overjoyed mother asked him to go home with her and he yielded to her wish, though casting a wistful glance after Sallie as she turned away by the side of the illustrious stranger.

There was nothing in the widow's cabin good enough for her boy that day, but their meal was seasoned with gratitude. Will partook of the homely dainties his mother pressed upon him, but his thoughts were clustering, like bees about a rose, around that look which he had won from Sallie's eyes in the moment when his peril was the greatest. He had scarcely any curiosity about the progress of the hunt, except that he keenly regretted the loss his benefactor had suffered.

"If I had money, mother," he said, "I would pay him for his horse."

"I thought you had quite a little sum laid by, William."

"It's only fifty dollars—and that's not a quarter the worth of that animal. He was as fine a horse as ever I saw. But I shall offer Mr. Daviess what I have toward making up his loss. I *had* hoped—" the young man blushed and grew silent.

His mother guessed that he had laid up that little sum toward placing himself in some independent situation, where he might

with more assurance of success, aspire to the hand of the daughter of the wealthy squire.

"I shall not begrudge it, though, mother—if it had not been for him, they would be digging my grave now. I guess I'll go back to the place now, mother; it's almost milking-time. I want to offer the money to Mr. Daviess, and hear if there's any news of Dan Smith."

Will went back to the farm, resuming the work of doing up the evening "chores," as if nothing unusual had occurred. When he went into the great kitchen, he could hear the voices of the family and their guest, still lingering around the table in the adjoining room. The pure pleasure of having saved an innocent life had perhaps imparted a lively impetus to the mind of the great lawyer, who had held spell-bound the hearts, and eyes, and ears, of the plain but hospitable family, with such talk as they had never heard before, until, as Mrs. Ringgold afterward declared, "there we sat and sat, till it was actually time to clear the table off and set it over again for supper."

Will helped himself to a couple of large wooden buckets and went out to milk. When he returned to the house with his milk, the squire and his guest were out in the yard, passing remarks on the farm.

"Have they brought in their game yet?" inquired the latter, as he saw William. "I must trudge on afoot, if they haven't."

"I'm afraid, sir, the game will be hard to tree. I'm very sorry—very sorry indeed—"

"That I saved your neck?" with a laugh.

Blushingly William pulled out a little bag from his coat-pocket.

"Will you take it? It's only fifty dollars, but it's every cent I have. If I had enough to buy you another horse, I should not feel so bad."

"Pshaw, young man, give me a drink of that new milk and I'll absolve you from all indebtedness to me. Keep your money to set up housekeeping with."

"Thar's one thing sart'in," said the squire, "you mustn't talk of leaving us to-night. Stay till we hear from the woods. If them men don't track that rascal, you'll never be allowed to go away on foot. We'll take up a collection and buy you another horse to-morrow morning."

"Well, well, my good friends, let it be as you say," said Jo Daviess, resigning himself to circumstances. "As I'm United States attorney, I'll make this State business, and prosecute and convict that scoundrel this very evening, if they bring him in," he added, jestingly. "I only wish I had joined them in the sport this afternoon. There's no kind of game I like to bring down so well as the human," and he immediately fell into one of those fits of abstraction for which he was remarkable.

It was not, as the matter-of-fact squire inferred, that he liked to shoot or hang villains which he meant, but that he liked to mark the guilty, to make them shrink before his penetrating eye, to expose fraud and villainy wherever found. Perhaps in that careless speech he was contemplating the warfare upon which he was about to enter with one of the subtlest and most brilliant characters who ever enacted the part of Lucifer in disguise upon the stage of the world.

In the mean time, the setting sun, which cast its roseate glow over the pleasant farm-yard, was darting its last brightness into the deep recesses of the forest, through which the excited pursuers were endeavoring to close in upon the fugitive. Every acre, almost, of that wilderness was familiar to the hard-pressed rider, who now chose out the wildest labyrinth through which he could urge his horse. But there were others nearly as familiar with it as himself; he knew that some of those on his track would take no better fun than to "hole" him; he was afraid to take any of the roads out into the clear country, for fear of being circumvented; as he judged that they would break into squads and scour the roads in every direction. So, trusting to fate, and the strength of his horse, he kept on in pathless caution.

He had gone on in this way for several hours, and began to feel quite safe, when he came suddenly near to a bridle-path, along which he heard the sound of horses' hoofs. Looking about, he perceived near at hand a fallen tree, the branches of which made a still deeper shelter than was afforded by the shadowy forest-spaces; into this he pushed the steed, remaining profoundly quiet until the party of three had passed him within twenty paces. He saw one of these to be Longleg Bill, the huge fellow who had promised Jo Daviess his horse that evening. They were trotting swiftly by, keeping a sharp look-out to either side, and had gone on without making any discoveries, when, as if to enable Bill to keep good his promise, the horse neighed loud and shrill, and the little party instantly wheeled toward the spot. At that instant a ray of the descending sun struck through the shadows and glittered on the metal knobs which spangled the bridle.

"Curse the luck!" muttered Dan Smith, looking about him. The underbrush, and the rough character of the ground just here, forbade the idea of flight; he knew that the unerring eye of Longleg Bill would soon fetch him up on that tack—no second was to be lost. Slipping off the animal, he paused in that moment of danger to fasten the bridle to a branch, so as to make it appear that he had abandoned his horse some time before; and then throwing himself flat upon the ground, he crept along a few feet, rolled down into a little hollow, and lay close to the earth, in the shelter of a clump of bushes, his gun by his side.

Longleg Bill gave a great oath when he saw that the horse was riderless.

"We can keep our promise to Squire Daviess, as far as the hoss is consarned ; but I've no notion of givin' up the fun to-night. We can't have a hanging unless thar's somebody to hang."

"Better go home and get somethin' to eat, and leave the rascal to the futur'—he'll be sure to be nabbed some time."

"Wal, I sartainly shan't leave without a squint at the premises. Daniel's got to come to judgment. He ain't going to get off as easy as his illustrious predecessor did from the den of lions. The b'ars are mighty thick hereabouts, and if they don't chaw him up, I reckon we'll make short work of him. Jest hold on, boys, till I take a peek."

The fugitive's heart beat fast ; if he had dared, he could have shot his worst enemy, who came directly in range as he pursued his investigations ; but the gun was a single-barreled one, and he had no powder or caps with him for another charge.

Suddenly Bill gave a loud whoop.

"We've un'arthed the varmint!" he cried, bounding forward toward the bushes, from which Dan now sprung, deftly placing the trunk of a large tree betwen himself and his antagonist, and from which he could well have defended himself against one ; but his rifle would not guard all points at once, and the circle formed by the three soon closed in upon him.

"I'm not going to give up without some revenge," he shouted. "One of you will catch it if you come any closer."

"Blaze away," cried Bill Longlegs, defiantly ; "we could make meat of you in a minute if we was a mind to fire. But we chuse to take ye prisoner. We want the fun of trotting ye back to the school-house, showing ye off as our game, and hanging ye from the same limb whar' you fixed the noose for Will Wood."

"Your share in the fun will be small," answered the baffled fugitive, forgetting prudence, which might have whispered to him to appeal to the mercy of the community, an l placing himself still further from forgiveness by discharging his weapon at the advancing man.

"I thought yer was a better shot, Dan Smith," exclaimed the latter, coolly rubbing his left arm, which the bullet had grazed sufficiently to draw considerable blood. "I wouldn't waste powder on a man who couldn't hit nearer the mark than that!"

Dan ground his teeth, glaring about him in baffled rage. Two men were behind him ; it was useless to run.

"Come, now, you miserable sneak," continued Bill, laying his brawny hands like iron upon his shoulder. "Yer a purty member of community, ain't yer ?—getting an innocent young

Per hung for yer own bad deeds, and firin' off a rifle like *that*. Put yer hands behind yer back while I tie 'em with this 'ere handkercher, which I s'pose you stole out of some one's pocket. It's a real bandanner, strong as rope. Now, get up on this here horse, with yer face to the tail, and we'll lead yer back, and show yer off to Miss Sallie. No kicking nor nothing, ye know," touching the pistol in his belt significantly. "Come on, boys—I know a short cut home—we can get to the squire's afore dark, if we try hard. I want to show off this 'ere game to Miss Ringgold, afore it's *too* dark."

A great hurrahing before the gate brought out the squire's family, just as twilight was giving place to the broad light of the full moon.

"Thar' you be!" cried Bill Longlegs, exultingly, as Jo Daviess came out with the others. "Ye see we've kept our promise. Here's your gun and your hoss—and if ye'd jest step down to the school-house, and try this rascal, according to the law, so's to have it all straight, we could get red of him in an hour or so. Jest take a look at him, Miss Sallie—ain't he a mean-looking varmint—a reg'lar painter, jest as slick, slim and ferocious! But he won't prowl round these parts no more. A painter 'll cry like a baby to fool folks into coming out in the dark, so he can chaw 'em up—and Dan Smith is one of the same sort. I got my eye on him last year—but I wasn't sartain. It's a lucky thing you give him the mitten, Miss Sallie."

Now Sallie was as tender-hearted a creature as ever pitied a jilted lover; but she had good reason for despising and disliking the man who had so nearly blasted her happiness. As she cast a cold look at him, sitting there in that ignominious position into which his captors had compelled him, something ludicrous in his appearance struck upon her excited mood, and she burst into a little laugh. This laugh was more nervous and hysterical, she being quite unstrung by the events of the day, than because she felt like laughing, but it was the deadlest insult she could have offered to the jealous and revengeful prisoner. The red blood which had glowed darkly and angrily through his face, receded, leaving it white with concentrated rage. He turned upon her a look so threatening that she shrunk before it, despite his powerless condition. It seemed to say, "I'm not dead yet, nor shan't be very soon—you'll be sorry for this some time."

Quite a crowd had by this time gathered in the road, the three men having brought their prisoner through the cluster of houses about the tavern, and those engaged in scouring the woods beginning to return, driven in by the coming of the night.

"Say, Squire Daviess, will ye help us fix thi—~~the~~?"

"That I will," was the response, and the lawyer, after giving his jaded and hungry steed to Will Wood to be carefully attended to, joined the party and proceeded to the school-house—Squire Ringgold having in the mean time furnished the famished men, who had been out without dinner or supper, a hearty lunch of bread and meat.

It did not require many formalities nor much time to settle the fate of the culprit. Squire Ringgold presided, as judge *pro tem.*, at the little unpainted desk, lighted up by a couple of "dips" in wooden sockets. Jo Daviess argued the prosecution for the State, making the wretched man cower beneath the scathing thunderbolts of his righteous wrath. In less than an hour the jury had pronounced him "guilty" of various crimes, and the judge had sentenced him to immediate execution. Pitiless hands led him out beneath the halter which dangled frightfully in the pure moonlight which shone peacefully upon the scene.

It was in vain that the wretched young man watched for some faintest chance for life—the fate which he had heartlessly prepared for another was descending with retributive swiftness upon himself. The noose was already about his neck, and eager hands clutching to draw it up, when the voice of Jo Daviess was heard, commanding a brief delay.

"My friends," said he, "I have been thinking that this man is doubtless one of the most cunning and influential leaders of the organized gangs of ruffians and murderers who infest our beloved Kentucky. He richly merits any punishment we may see fit to mete out to him. But would it not be well, first to extort from him such confessions as will give us the clue to the whole organization of these desperadoes? In this manner we will not only be better guarded against future depredations, but will be able to bring more of them to justice. I propose, if he will give us the information we demand, to delay the execution of his sentence for one month."

There was a murmur of mingled approval and disapproval.

"A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush," muttered Bill Longlegs.

It was precisely upon this feeling that the astute lawyer proposed to work. He knew that "while there is life, there is hope," and that any respite, however brief, would be eagerly seized upon by the prisoner, as giving him some hope to escape his doom entirely. A month in which to watch his chance, seemed a lifetime to a man about whose neck the rope was tightening—he considered it almost as good as an unconditional release.

"Supposing I tell all I know, and then you up and hang me after all?" he asked, suspiciously.

"We shall keep our word with you," was Daviess' reply, and it was sufficient. No man doubted the word of Jo Daviess in great or small matters. "But mind you, young man, this must be a *bona fide* confession—no false stories to put us on the wrong track! I shall know precisely when you are telling the truth and when you are lying."

Dan met the gaze fixed firmly upon him, and felt as if those eyes could indeed see through him as if he were glass. He hesitated. In the first eager thrill of hope, he had intended to make a false confession, thus saving his honor among thieves and escaping present peril. When he saw that any such attempt would be detected and end in his summary death at the hands of the angry men about him, for a moment that spark of integrity which remained alive in him, and which prompted him not to consign his friends and comrades to the danger which threatened himself, warmed up in his cold blood. But the threatening aspect of the impatient crowd subdued his momentary courage. Life was too sweet to be sacrificed to a scruple—and perhaps, if he should escape soon, he could warn those he should betray, in time for them to effect their escape, or destroy the evidences of their guilt.

"Stop! I confess," he groaned, as angry hands pulled on the rope.

He was taken back to the room, and the lawyer, sitting down at the schoolmaster's desk, wrote out the statements which were made by the prisoner, who was then required to sign his name to them, for which purpose his hands were temporarily released. When he felt the cords unbound, he darted a quick glance in every direction; but vengeful eyes were flashing from every door and window, knives and pistols were ready in willing hands.

"Want to take another run?" asked Bill Longlegs, mockingly, noticing the swift and stealthy observation.

The confession of Dan Smith had provoked exclamations of astonishment more than once from the assemblage. Even Mr. Daviess himself was dismayed at some of the names which were given of persons, in different parts of the State, occupying more or less prominent positions, who were concerned in the most villainous schemes of robbery and fraud. He searched the face of the man as he gave his testimony, and so piercing was his intuition, that once or twice, when from motives of revenge, the witness mentioned the names of innocent persons, he at once challenged the statement, proving to Dan that he was playing a dangerous game when he departed from facts.

The excitement in the crowd, caused by the confession, was intense; and the knowledge gained was so important that even Bill Longlegs was satisfied to delay the execution of the criminal,

joining with others in applauding the skill and wisdom of Jo Daviess—their admiration of whom was growing into that kind of idolatry which untutored natures are prone to bestow on those who acquire an ascendancy over their hearts and imaginations.

Many of the secret depots of stolen stores, the rendezvous of horse-thieves and counterfeiters, and their favorite haunts in Louisville and Lexington, were made known. The lawyer took possession of the papers containing the testimony, the *court* adjourned, and the prisoner, strongly bound, and escorted by a party of well-armed men, was conveyed away to the tavern for the night, where a strong guard was placed upon him, and from whence, in the morning, he was marched to the nearest jail.

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVERS.

WILL WOOD was not present at the trial of his adversary. As we have said, his nature was of a finer texture than that of the hard-grained settlers among whom he had grown up. His father had been an educated man, who had gone to the new country from an earnest desire to serve his Maker, not in the pleasantest places, but where there was the greatest amount of work to be done. Will had received from this parent, before his death when his son was about fifteen, the elements of an education. He was a good grammarian, having studied the English and Latin grammars, and was something of a mathematician—he made altogether the best teacher who had ever presided in this little log “temple of knowledge.” He had inherited the grace and fineness of his father’s mind, tempered and toughened by his rough life, so as to be in no danger of its growing too delicate. The hardiest backwoodsman respected him for a moral courage which stood him instead of a stout physical development. Although so poor as to hire out as a farm-hand through the summers, he had commanded more respect than youths who had well-to-do parents. People looked up to him for his book learning; Squire Ringgold, one of the wealthiest farmers, treated him, in his family, as an equal, regarding him with no little wonder and pride when he did Sallie’s “sums” for her, of evenings, so readily, and wrote the squire’s letters for him in such a bold, round hand. But when it came to the question of having him for a son-in-law—that might be a different matter!

Many of the F. F.'s of Virginia had settled this portion of Kentucky, which was, indeed, an offshoot of the parent State, and there was a kind of rude aristocracy even in this primitive settlement.

Squire Ringgold, knowing more about dogs and horses than about books or polite society, nevertheless considered his an F. F., and was wont to measure people by the land they owned, and more still by the land which their fathers had owned before them. *His* father and grandfather had been lords of the soil of old Virginia. Joyous, free-lived, and irreverent, abounding in oaths, and given to good-living and high drinking, he had an undisguised contempt for itinerant preachers. The Methodist ministers, who, like the apostles of old, went about preaching the gospel, taking neither coat nor scrip, never received encouragement or pecuniary aid from him.

It was therefore rather against Will that he was descended from stock so despised—a New England Methodist parson.

Thus far in his life, Will Wood had got along with the respect and good wishes of the neighborhood. The question of acres of land and family descent would never have troubled him, had not the squire's frequently expressed views on these subjects, coupled with the grace and beauty of his daughter, at length awakened a dread and doubt in the midst of the happy dreams into which the youth had gradually and unconsciously fallen.

If it had not been for the *fear*, he would hardly have been conscious of the *hope*—so silently had love, like the dew of heaven, fallen upon his heart. For weeks before the events which had so suddenly startled the quiet of affairs, he had been struggling against the passion which had grown upon him, convinced both that Sallie regarded him with the greatest indifference, and that, even if he could win her affections, the squire would never consent to the match.

His doubt and unhappiness were wearing upon his health; he had made up his mind that he would get released from his engagement to the squire and seek work in some distant place, where he could fight to better advantage with his weakness than when Sallie's sweet lips and eyes were constantly within hearing and speaking distance; when, three evenings before this of our story, upon the young girl's shyly and earnestly asking him what made him so pale and have so little appetite lately, he had all at once determined to tell her the truth. The answer he had made was to ask her for her company that evening. Now Sallie, urged perhaps by thoughtless coquetry; or by the feeling that Will had never made any advances to her, had not refused to be at home, when Dan Smith, that morning, riding past, had asked if he might spend the evening with her. The results of that little chance collision of interests have been given.

The evening of that eventful day was occupied by the young couple in pleasanter business than attending the trial of Dan. The departure of all the men about the place, except himself, gave Will the opportunity he had so long desired of speaking to Sallie. Mrs. Ringgold, with her two stout servant girls, was busy clearing away the remains of the dinner, about which they had sat such an unconscionable time, and in preparing supper for the squire and his company, when they should return from the school-house. Sallie, her heart over-full of the many feelings excited by the swiftly changing scenes through which she had passed in the last two days, felt like being alone; the noise and clatter of the cheerful kitchen were too much for her; leaving the house, she stole to the front gate, over which she leaned a long time, the full moon shining straight down into her face, over her glossy brown hair, and about the round, slender figure, so pretty in its homely dress of check gingham.

The farm-house and farm made an attractive picture in the soft light. The gate led into a wide, open yard, in the center of which stood the house, a roomy affair, of no style whatever, being partly of hewn logs, and partly frame, two stories in front, with all kinds of wings and additions which had grown up about the main part, as the exigencies of the household required. One immense oak stood at the south corner, shading and overhanging nearly half the building; the rest of those fine old forest-trees which might have adorned the lawn, had been long cut down, with that want of taste which distinguishes most new settlements. Further back lay the great barn, perhaps quite as large as the dwelling, with a brood of lesser structures about it, sheds, haystacks, cornhouse, etc. The orchard lay along the west side, sloping gently down to a meadow, through which a little stream could be seen, a silver chain across its bosom. Along the north arose the dark, almost unbroken wilderness, in the shelter of which, just within its edge, stood the little log school-house at which the trial was now progressing. The road which led out of it, and which passed the gate, was lined upon either side, for a long distance, with farm lands. Two or three other houses were in sight; and just beyond the bend in the road, where a grove of young hickories shut it out from view, was "the tavern," which had become the nucleus of a little village. Adjoining the tavern, was a store, where a miscellaneous assortment of goods supplied the most pressing wants of its patrons, whether in the line of combs and calicoes, shirtings, sugars or shot, kettles, coffee, plows, pins, or what not. It was the custom of the squire to go, five or six times a year, with his wagon, either to Frankfort or Cynthiana, for family supplies; but the store served for any passing necessity.

However, this has nothing at present to do with Sallie, leaning over the gate. She had forgotten herself and her surroundings; she was absorbed, entirely, in the glance of a pair of eyes which had turned to her, in the hour of danger and seeming death, with such a look of hopeless love. From this dream she was startled by the sound of a脚步 coming around the porch at the side of the house, and down the walk to her side. She knew the脚步 well; she had no need to turn her head, so she kept as still as if she heard nothing.

"Sallie!"

"Oh, it's you, is it, Will? Do you wish to pass through?" stepping back to give him an opportunity.

"No, I am not going out. I came down here to—to—look at the moonlight. It is so pleasant out-of-doors this evening."

"Yes," said Sallie, softly, "it's as light as day."

There was nothing very new or brilliant in this remark certainly, but something in the voice and in the downcast eyes produced a deep effect upon her companion. He leaned over the gate beside her—he could almost hear her heart throb, but the two did not look at each other immediately; they were afraid of the joy of seeing too much, each in the face of the other—so they gazed up into the sky.

"It never looked so bright to me, somehow, as it does to-night," resumed the young man, after a pause. "I suppose because it came so near shining upon my grave."

"I have been thinking of that too, Will," with a little shiver—then she turned her glance upon him, as if to drive away the vision of his dishonored corpse as it *might have been*, and to assure herself that he was here, in life and health. Her wistful gaze met one so earnest that her tender heart melted within her. "Oh, Will," she cried, flinging her arms about his neck, and bursting into tears, "how horrible it was to-day! I can not forget it."

"I would have passed through it all, Sallie, ten times over for *this*,"—he pressed her to him. "Oh, Sallie, I never thought you would love me. I can not believe it now. What will your father say?"

"He can not keep me from liking you, whatever he says. Let me go, Will. It is so light—and mother may be looking."

It was a "bashful art" to get away from his close clasp, of which she suddenly became conscious, when the first burst of her own emotion was over. He took his arm from about her waist, retaining the hand which trembled in his.

"May I ask the squire's consent to our promising each other, Sallie?"

"You must ask him, of course. I know he likes you better than any other young man of his acquaintance; but he has

those foolish ideas about matters. He may say what he will, but I'm sure I should be happier with you, if we never had enough money to buy us a cow, than with *anybody* else, no matter how rich they were?"

"Dear Sallie!"

"And I think mother will be on our side. She didn't like Daniel Smith. But I've heard her speak a good word for you more than once. That evening I kept company with Dan, she told me she thought I might have looked nearer home and chosen better."

"There, they are coming back from court," exclaimed Will, as a crowd of men emerged from the forest into the open road. "Poor Dan! I suppose it is all over with him by this time."

The young girl made no answer. Through her warm, happy heart, the thought of death struck with a chill; she shuddered, clinging to his hand.

"No! there he is now—they're going to take him to jail, I do believe. I am sure that's Dan, in the midst of those men. Yes, it is."

The two remained by the gate, while the crowd rode past, Squire Ringgold and his guest turning aside at the farm, the others going on. The prisoner, chained at the wrists, and goaded by the sarcasm of Bill Longlegs, as he went by, saw distinctly the pair of lovers. Jealousy gave him sharpness of vision; he knew, by their expression, what had passed between them, and he ground his teeth to think of his thwarted passion and disconcerted plans. As much as it was in him to love any one, Dan had loved the pretty and light-hearted girl. Her father's broad acres, fine horses and free living had been no impediment to his passion; he had some time since made up his mind that the arrangement, if it could be consummated, would be a fine one for him; when, going too fast, as we have seen, he was tripped in the grass himself had tied.

Mr. Daviess smiled upon the maiden as she turned and walked by his side to the house.

"That young man wears a much happier look than he did when I chanced to stop at the old school-house this morning," he remarked.

Sallie blushed beneath his penetrating glance; but when she raised her eyes, there were tears in them, and she said, earnestly:

"We shall neither of us ever forget you, sir."

The next morning, when Joseph Hamilton Daviess, United States Attorney, passed the village tavern on his black horse, in his hunting-shirt and coon-skin cap, his gun across his shoulder, riding onward to his business of bringing down game, both wild and civilized, he was greeted with three rousing

cheers from the few who chanced to be in the vicinity. Raising his cap politely in reply, he pursued his way, leaving behind him the admiring good wishes of all.

Three weeks after that, when he returned upon the same road, stopping at Squire Ringgold's for dinner, he was informed that Daniel Smith had "broke jail" and escaped; that nothing had as yet been heard of him, though a few had sworn his capture. Pretty Sallie was looking a little sad and pale, though very glad to see him; and Will Wood walked along beside his horse, after he had resumed his journey, for two or three miles, to confide to him that the squire had refused to give him his daughter—that they, the lovers, felt very unhappy about it; but that Sallie was willing to wait, years, if necessary, to give him a chance to acquire either money or such a position as would reconcile her father to the match.

"And now, Mr. Daviess, I have enough money in my pocket to pay my board for the winter in some plain family. May I come and study law with you? I read Latin pretty well, and have always wished to be a lawyer. I am not yet twenty-one—it is not too late to begin. Only say I may come?"

The attorney looked down into the anxious face of the youth. Whatever it was he saw there of determination, or talent, or fitness, something there was which induced him to give his consent.

CHAPTER IV.

LOST.

WITH mingled joy and sorrow Sallie had bidden her lover farewell. On foot, his little bundle of clothing swung from a stick across his shoulder, he had started for the capital of Kentucky, to try his fortune in an arena which he felt was better fitted for him than the rough labors of a backwoods settlement. In the depths of her trusting heart, the inexperienced girl believed that he would come back to her with his name enrolled among the best—perhaps, in the course of time, by the side of Jo Daviess. This hope gave her courage to part with him for a long period; he might return for a brief visit in the spring; but for the joy and comfort of having him permanently near her she did not look for so long, long a time that she dared not try to count it. One charge Will had given her in those sad moments of parting, which was, to be kind to his mother. She would be very lonely in his absence; the visits of the young girl, or any acts of kindness she might do her, would be highly

appreciated. In accordance with his desire, she had gone often to see the widow, whose cabin was half a mile from her home, near the edge of the forest, but not alone, as there were two others of the same class within a stone's throw of it. The autumn had deepened into winter by the time Will left; there had been no snow in that vicinity, but the December days were short and sharp.

One day, after dinner, Sallie took her little work-basket which Will had made for her of pine cones, and in which was her knitting and some dainties which she had laid by for Mrs. Wood, and started off to make her usual weekly visit. She did not return to tea, at which her mother felt uneasy, for she knew that the old lady had no one to send home with her as an escort, and the night had already closed unusually early and very dark.

"Benjamin must start right off, without waiting for his supper," she said to the squire, as he came in, with two or three of his hired men, from the stable, where he had been personally attending to the condition of a new span of horses.

"It is time she was home an hour ago, that's sartain," responded he. "Here, Tom, take the lantern and start right off. It's likely you'll meet her on the way."

In the course of an hour the messenger returned, with his mouth wide open, and his eyes like a pair of goggles.

"I declare to goodness, mum, I don't know what to make of it. I kept a sharp look-out all the way there; besides, she'd have seen me and the lantern if she'd have passed us. When I got thar' the widder said she'd been gone nigh onto an hour and a half. So I started back, and I looked on both sides all the way, and I hain't seen nothin' of her—thar'!"

"Mercy on us!" screamed Mrs. Ringgold, letting the cup drop from her hand from which she had been drinking her tea.

"Don't fret yourself, wife," spoke the squire, himself turning slightly pale. "It's likely she stopped to the other neighbors, and it's got so dark she was afraid to come home."

"There's nobody there she visits," said the mother.

"She ain't there," decided Ben. "I stopped in an' inquired."

"Husband!" said Mrs. Ringgold, walking back and forth across the floor, and speaking the words with dread, "I've heerd the bears were uncommon bad this winter. Do you think they've ventured down to the woods yet?"

"Pshaw!" answered he, loudly; but he went into the bedroom and took down his gun as he said it. "Come, boys," he continued, walking out into the kitchen, "get the lanterns and the dogs, and you as have rifles bring them—I'm afraid Sallie's lost!"

All that night the mother waited for tidings. Some of the neighbors came to sit with her; a great fire was kept up in the sitting-room fireplace to "warm the poor child when she should be found, for long before midnight it was conceded she must be lost, or have met with some strange accident, for she was at no one's within the circle of her acquaintance. A dozen times Mrs. Ringgold went up stairs to her daughter's little sleeping-room to assure herself that she really was not there. Every nook of the farm was searched. Mrs. Wood felt terribly. Feeble as she was, she had walked the half-mile to sit with the distressed mother, and to hear the earliest tidings. She stated that it was twilight when Sallie left her house; but she stayed a little later than she intended, waiting to toe off the stocking upon which she had been knitting; but that it was still light enough to find her way without difficulty; and that she had *not* inadvertently taken the road toward the woods, instead of the lane, for she had watched her until she was nearly out of sight on her way back.

There was a small hill about the eighth of a mile from the cabin, at the foot of which ran the stream which crossed the squire's farm, and which was fringed with bushes on either side the bridge which spanned it. Mrs. Wood had watched her visitor until she descended this hill. The stream was a mere shallow brook, not deep enough for drowning persons, but its bed and every bush in the vicinity were carefully examined. Here, drifted by the water under the bridge, and caught in a nest of driftwood which had accumulated there, they found the work-basket which Sallie had carried with her. Again and again the half-crazed mother would go and look at the basket, with the dripping stocking, the ball of yarn, the handkerchief, the needle-book, which could none of them answer the questions as to what had befallen their owner.

At daylight the squire and his men, with the neighbors who had joined him, came back completely exhausted. An examination, by the light of the sun, revealed no traces of bloodshed or violence about the spot where the basket was found. There had been, for a fortnight, rumors of bears appearing more boldly than common, on the outskirts of the settlement; but if the girl had fallen a prey to any wild animal, there would have been some traces of the struggle—at least some remnant of her clothing to mark the place. A bear might possibly have dragged her some distance before devouring his prey, for fear of molestation upon the road; but there were no traces of beasts or men upon the frozen ground.

Pausing only to refresh himself with half a dozen cups of strong coffee, the squire ordered all the horses to be brought out; those who volunteered in the search filled their pockets

with bread and meat, looked well to their rifles, filled their canteens with the squire's whisky, and an organized party, some on foot and others mounted, were soon scouring the country in all directions.

For three days the ordinary avocations of the settlement were neglected. Nearly every man was engaged in the search—for Sallie Ringgold, the best and most beautiful girl of the country, could not thus mysteriously disappear without a profound sensation being created. The women wondered and sympathized, going to offer such consolation as they could to the poor mother, whose hair was gaining silver threads and her face wrinkles every day. Amid the most persevering of those out in search was Bill Longlegs, who continued with a dogged, desperate resolution, after every one but the father had given up and returned home to await the unraveling of the mystery. He had admired Sallie from her childhood, and like a fierce and faithful watch-dog, would have sprung at the throat of any brute or man who would have offered her injury. However, neither patience nor zeal were of any avail.

"I swear," growled the squire, grown grayer and older by years, as he rested himself the fourth night, having come home entirely worn out, "I believe, after all, that pesky girl has run off after that parson's son. Thar's no tellin' what these women will do when they're opposed—blast her! she ought to be killed, if she *has* gone off, and made us this trouble."

"Oh, husband, do you think she can have done it?" cried the mother, joyfully. "Oh, I know you will start to-morrow morning for Frankfort. I must go along with you. I can not bear the suspense until you get back."

"I ain't such a fool as to trapse after her, the ungrateful chit," swore the wrathful squire; nevertheless, he set out with his wife, after an early breakfast, for the capital in which Will Wood was pursuing his legal studies.

In the rough, frozen state of the roads, it took two days of tedious traveling to make the forty-five miles of the journey. The stout family carriage went jolting along, the squire himself driving his fine span of horses. It relieved his humor to swear; and swear he did at the roads, at the ruts, at the cold, at the team, at the taverns, at any and every thing except his wife, whom he could not bring himself to swear at, as she sat patiently beside him, leaning forward always a little, hour after hour, as if her eyes and heart being in advance, her body would fain keep up with them. She was never cold or hungry, never wanted to stop at wayside farm-houses to warm her feet, and was surprised that her husband did not decide to drive on all night, which he might have concluded to do had the weather not been so cold that he knew Percilla could not endure it.

By break of day, the second of their journey, they were on the road again. Any one, to have heard him, would have thought Squire Ringgold had never in his life done any thing so unwillingly, and in such anger, as take this little trip.

"The sassy little hussy! after behaving herself all her life, to up and behave in this style! Thar's no time of year I couldn't have gone to better advantage than now. Christmas coming, and things to be 'tended to!"

Now this was the very season when there was the least to do; but the wife let him talk on; she knew it relieved him; and that it was not ill-humor nor malice which made him so bitter, but rather fear and restlessness. She knew that he would give his right hand to know that Sallie actually had run away and was this moment the wife of that parson's son. It would have been a relief to that constant, agonizing strain of suspense upon every faculty, to both of them, to know certainly that she was dead, and how. This idea of the squire's that she might have started for the capital, by some secret agreement between them, made before her lover went away, was seized upon by the parents as a beam of light would be by the blind.

"There's Frankfort at last," he exclaimed, as the little town came in sight, at sunset of the second day. "I declar', I believe the first thing I'll do will be to march in on those young rogues, and switch 'em both with this," and he cracked his whip frightfully. "Sallie's disgraced herself—she shall never be daughter of mine any more—never have an acre of land, nor a dollar of money! I just want to satisfy you, Percilla, that she's here, and then we'll turn round and come home again."

"Oh, don't, husband," pleaded the mother, soothingly, before whose mental vision flitted a pleasant picture of clasping her lost child in her arms, of reconciling the squire, and bringing the guilty couple home in the carriage, to spend the holidays. She had even allowed hope to comfort her so much as to actually be calculating how many boxes of raisins and pounds of citron she would stow away under the seats to be used at Christmas for making the tardy wedding-cake, when they drove into the main street of the town, and a sudden cold sense of desolation took possession of her. Not knowing where the young couple would be stopping, the only thing to be done was to inquire for the United States Attorney's office, and drive there. As they drew up before the State House, where they had been told they should find his office, the janitor was lighting the evening lamps; there was to be an evening session of the legislature, but people generally were now absent to their suppers. When the squire lifted his wife from the carriage, she trembled so that she could scarcely stand.

"You are cold?" he said.

"I don't know," she answered, "let us hurry in."

While they were inquiring in the hall, from the janitor, where to find Mr. Daviess, that gentleman himself came out of a door near at hand, dressed in a blue suit, faced with buff, with a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Squire Ringgold—and Mrs. Ringgold. I'm glad to meet you here. Were you looking for me?"

"For William Wood," almost whispered the poor mother, as he shook her hand.

"He is right at hand now; in this room. Will you walk in?" and he led her by the hand into the office, where a young man stood by the fire, the lamps not yet being lighted. He was reading by the bright light of the blazing wood, but when he heard the voices of his visitors, the book fell from his hand.

"William, where's Sallie?"

The question burst from Mrs. Ringgold's heart like a cry. A dead silence of half a moment of surprise followed; the young man looked from her to the squire, troubled and bewildered; all eyes were fixed upon him.

"Why, where is she, Mrs. Ringgold—is she here?"

The surprise and anxiety with which he asked revealed at once that he was innocent alike of her whereabouts or what had befallen her.

"She's gone—lost! we can not find her," groaned the squire, while his wife sunk helpless into a chair, covering her face with her hands.

Will was too much overwhelmed to have even a question to ask; he seemed to be doubting that he had really heard bad news, or that the squire and his wife were actually before him. Mr. Daviess it was who made the squire sit down, and won from him the story of his daughter's disappearance, and the fruitless search which had followed. When it was all told, Will, striding to and fro through the room, suddenly paused, his eyes fixed upon those of the Attorney-General—a moment they looked at each other, when the latter said:

"You think she has fallen into the hands of Daniel Smith?"

"I do."

"So do I."

"How do you think Dan would dare to venture into that part of the country?" asked the squire.

"He would dare any thing for revenge," said Jo Daviess; "he was a desperate fellow—I wish we had hung him on the spot!"

"Hanged and quartered him!" growled the squire; "but look, there's mother done beat out—she's falling out of her chair."

The poor lady was indeed unable to hold up any longer under

so much grief and disappointment. She was assisted to the carriage, which was driven to the best hotel, where Mr. Daviess himself saw that all possible things were done for her comfort; for he had been too much pleased with Sallie Ringgold's innocent yet spirited beauty, to hear of her fate without the deepest sympathy.

Will returned home with the Ringgolds. His soul was on fire with impatience to be doing something, he hardly knew what, toward discovering Sallie's fate. His kind teacher, as he wrung his hand at parting, wishing him God-speed, assured him that he should keep a sharp look-out in his own vicinity, and if he got upon the trail of Smith, or any of his associates, he would take the trouble to let him know. The testimony of Dan, by the way, was still in Daviess' hands, while he had sent detectives here and there, through the State, to spy out and seize certain guilty parties.

The squire was very willing now to have a partner as earnest as himself in the sad business which he was about; the carriage was driven straight back, without any pause, except one or two brief ones for warmth and food, arriving home at midnight of the same day upon which it left Frankfort.

"I wish you'd a' married the girl and done with it," the squire had remarked to him, during a long silence of the melancholy drive.

"If any one's been harming her for revenge on us, they'd have taken her anyhow," replied Will. "When I think of it, I almost wish she had fallen a prey to some hungry bear. One thing is certain—I will never rest until I have discovered all—and then, if any one has injured a hair of her head, he'll pay dearly for it."

"More spirit than I give him credit for," muttered the squire, looking sideways at the dark, lowering brow and flashing eyes of the young man. "I shouldn't like to stand in his way when he's got his grit up, if he is a parson's son."

All hearts beat fast as they approached the family mansion upon their return. Tidings might have been received since they went away. It was night, and there was no friendly neighbor upon the road to relieve their suspense.

Heavy as lead fell the dull voice of Ben, the hostler, as, roused by the knocking of the squire, he opened the kitchen door, and in answer to their eager inquiries, replied that nothing had been seen or heard of Sallie.

Mrs. Ringgold went to bed, utterly prostrated by the failure of every hope; the next morning found her too ill to rise, with no light-footed, affectionate daughter to wait upon her wishes, and her husband giving up gloomily both courage and action when he found her so despairing. A miserable blight had fallen

upon the prosperity of the proud and flourishing family. It was very near to Christmas, but there was no preparation going on in the ample kitchen for that good cheer which should have distinguished the holidays. The cook and housemaid moved about drearily; and the hired men seemed almost afraid to come in and go out. The closing of a door, a knock, a sudden noise of any kind, startled every inmate of the mansion, showing how all thoughts were fixed upon one subject, and to what a state of nervous intensity the perceptions, even of the more indifferent members of the household, had been wrought.

So much was Squire Ringgold changed from his former cheerful, noisy, imperative character, that he was no longer fitted to act or advise. Upon Will Wood fell the part of endeavoring to unravel the mystery which surrounded the fate of the girl whom he loved. And it was well that in constant, untiring exertion he found relief from the otherwise unbearable misfortune which had befallen him.

Mrs. Ringgold kept her bed day after day, and always before her, where she could keep her eyes fixed upon it, was the work-basket, with its knitting, which had been the sole thing seen or heard from which belonged to Sallie.

Before taking any step at all, after arriving at the homestead, Will Wood had held a long consultation with Bill Longlegs, in whose sagacity he had much confidence, and whose services he wished to secure in the steps which he was about to take. Into this work Bill entered with the greatest eagerness.

CHAPTER V.

IN DISGUISE.

ANY one who had ever seen Bill Longlegs—as everybody called him, though his real name was Mixon—would have thought it impossible for him ever to disguise himself. His peculiar countenance, his light-yellow hair, and the extraordinary length of his arms and legs made him so conspicuously himself, that it would seem vain for him to attempt to transform himself into anybody else. Yet his best friends would not have known him had they seen him, as, one sharp winter morning, he passed out of the village on horseback, accompanied by a pale, ministerial-looking person, in white cravat and hat, with long black hair combed smoothly backward, a pair of green spectacles, and a bundle of tracts peeping out of his coat pocket. Bill's hair had grown as black as that of his companion, while a pair of

whiskers filled out and concealed his hollow cheeks; for almost the first time in his life he wore a coat and trowsers instead of the flannel shirt and leather breeches which formed his usual costume. He was tamed down from the rough ranger into a quiet-looking farmer, who carried his gun across the neck of his horse for the purpose of shooting any chance game which came in his way. No one would have suspected that under the blue coat was a belt filled with a knife and brace of pistols, and a heart that beat fiercely with the desire for revenge. His companion carried no weapons which were visible, but there was something in his inner pockets more suitable for fighting wild beasts or men, than the bundle of good books which appeared upon the outside. They trotted leisurely out of the village and struck into the forest-road, through which they traveled for several hours, after which they came out into the cleared country again, stopped for dinner at a log-tavern which hung out its shingle by the wayside, and, after an hour's rest, resumed their journey, pressing their horses to rather more speed, for they were anxious to reach Lexington by nightfall, and the road was a long one. At the house where they had partaken of the bacon and eggs with corn-cake, which was the staple meal to be had at all such places, several other travelers had been lounging about. Bill had observed them and had quietly discovered that they were not the right kind of people; he had met too many of their quality not to read them. Three of them seemed, like himself, to be only stopping for dinner. Their horses were hitched, not in the shed which formed the customary shelter, but out of sight, a little back in the shadow of a grove. He found opportunity for examining these animals, and seeing that they were all unusually fine.

"Stolen! every one of them, by jingo," muttered the ranger; but he only betrayed his suspicions by being very social, inquisitive, and apparently what those he talked with would have denominated "green."

These were in good spirits; it seemed to excite their humor very freely to find that they had such excellent company as a farmer and a Methodist parson. Suspecting that the farmer might have money about him, they tried to persuade him to play cards, two or three packs of which were in requisition.

"I never played but a few games in my life," he replied, "don't scarcely know a queen from a jack. I rayther expect you'd better get my friend here to jine you. I've heard he was death on poker or brag; though as I don't purtend to be a judge I can't say if it's true. All I know is that Methodist parsons are usually more at home with a pack of cards than a testament."

"Permit me, my friend, to suggest that that is a grievous

and unchristian scandal," returned the parson, with some severity.

"Oh — it, of course it is," laughed one of the strangers.

"Friend, I have a tract here on the subject of swearing—if you will accept it, it may do—"

"Hello, here, parson, that's coming it too strong! We shan't meddle with you if you don't with us, but don't be poking your tracts at us. If you'd offered to stand treat, now, it would have been more to our taste."

The parson relapsed into silence, but the open-hearted farmer immediately offered to do the polite thing in his friend's place. The landlord was ordered to furnish drinks all 'round at his expense. After this the company were more determined than ever to make him play, confident that he had money. Finally he consented to play a game of poker for a stake of fifty cents, and lost it; he was vexed, and continued to play until he had lost ten dollars, a little at a time.

"Come, now, that's too bad," said his opponent; "double it, and see if you can't win."

Thoroughly excited, he now consented to double the amount, and was kindly allowed to win.

"Thar'! you've got a cool twenty out of us—let's try it ag'in! Come, put up your money—how much have you got? I'll risk a hundred dollars."

"I hain't got but eighty dollars with me—I'll put that up against your hundred."

"You're very imprudent, my friend; be advised," remarked the parson.

"Oh, I'm in for't now. Might as well purceed. My wife would be right tickled to see me coming home with a hundred and ten dollars more'n I went away with."

The travelers exchanged sly glances with each other; their victim was worked up to just the state of excitement which they desired. A little trick, well known to them, would be certain to place the stakes in his opponent's hand. They played—the farmer lost.

"It's too all-fired bad," he said, with a groan. "Wife'll be as mad as hops. Come to remember, I *hate* got a hundred more here, in the real shiners. But I shouldn't like to lose. No x if I thought I could be more successful—"

"Of course you will! better luck next time! Plank the money, old fellow."

"I've lost so much, I won't play even any more. If you'll put down two to one, I'll try to make up what I've lost."

"Oh, we'll do that—jest to accommodate you," replied his adversary, with a wink to his companions.

"Here, parson, you hold the stakes," said the farmer.

"Excuse me, my friend, it's against my convictions to have anything to do with so dangerous and enticing a sin as gambling."

"Got to do it, parson," said a stout, reckless-looking fellow. "You're the only honest one in the crowd, you know, and I'm moughty afraid you'll contrive to cabbage part of the funds as it is."

With laughter and coarse jesting the money was placed in the minister's hands. The game was played—but this time the trick was performed by the green farmer—the game was won by him. He rose coolly and took the three hundred dollars from the holder, pocketed it, smiled, and offered to treat again.

"I'll buy wife a new dress," he said, slapping his pockets exultingly.

The anger and disappointment of the players was too great to be concealed; they refused to accept the treat; but insisted on renewing the game, with a hope of getting back what they had lost.

"Too much of a hurry—got to reach Lexington to-night. Daren't stop another minute—or I'd *like* to try it again—I would, *r'aly*. Come, parson, we must hurry up."

The two travelers mounted their horses and departed amid lowering and surly looks. A few miles ahead was a dense forest like that which they had crossed in the early part of the day. They had not much more than entered its gloomy depths—the immense trees hanging over the narrow road so as to exclude the sunlight almost entirely, and thick growths of under-brush rising like hedges on either side—when they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs behind them.

"Now, Will Wood, be on your guard. They're after that money. I thought they'd foller us. Keep cool and have your pistols ready," said his companion to the parson, not even turning his head until the three tavern acquaintances rode up close behind them and spoke:

"We're on our way to Lexington too—thought we'd like good company," said one of them, riding up close to the farmer.

"The more the merrier," was his careless response.

They continued on together, exchanging remarks until, in descending a little hollow, particularly dark and forbidding in its aspect, the three strangers suddenly closed about the two others, with pistols pressed to their very breasts.

"We want back that money. Come, give it up quick. And while you're about it, you might as well let us have the horses, too. You can walk to Lexington, you know—exercise will do you good."

"Oh, don't shoot!" cried the farmer, in a frightened manner, "don't shoot! It would break wife's heart to have anything happen to me."

"Give up the money quick, then, and spar' your wife's feelin's."

"Oh, dear! it's too bad—too all-fired bad—don't you say so, parson? I've act'ally picked out, in my mind's eye, the dress I was a-goin' to buy Polly. But if you insist on it in *that* manner, with *them* kind of arguments, and sence you've got hold of my gun, why, parson, I'd better give 'em back what they ask for, hadn't I?"

As he put this question to his friend, and his hand in his pocket at the same time, he looked meaningfully at the parson, who also put his hand up as if to draw out *his* purse.

"Ef you r'aly insist, why—I reckon—we'll have to—giv' 'em fits!" and before the words were out of his mouth, the pistols of two of the men were sent flying off into the bushes, and the third one was knocked senseless from his horse by a ~~sweep~~ of the long rifle.

"Thar' now, you needn't trouble to find your fire-arms. You can get along without 'em. Don't be in a hurry, friends, nuther," and the drawn triggers of the weapons pointed toward them gave vigor to the remark. "You'll want to stop and help your fellow-sinner here. Get down and lift him up on his hoss—tie him on good, so's he won't lose, and jest fasten his hands together. Stop, till I take car' of his pistol! He might hurt you with it, when he comes to! Jest let them ar' knives be whar' they are, and we'll be much obligeed to ye if you'll hurry up, for we want to give you free lodgings in Lexington to-night."

The astonished villains, upon whom the tables had been thus suddenly turned, did not dare to resist; there was something in the eye of their captor which they had not seen there during his good-humored awkwardness at the tavern—a blaze as startling and unexpected as had been the movement which had placed them *hors du combat*.

"That'll do. I guess he'll stay on, 'specially if one or t'other of you holds him. Ride on, gentlemen—I wouldn't be so imperlite as to go ahead. And the next time you play poker or brag, be sure 'tain't Bill Longlegs you're makin' game of."

"Well, Bill, if it's you," exclaimed one of the prisoners, with a curse, "all I can say is, you're full as smart as you've got the credit for being."

"Sartainly, of course; and what's more, me and my friend here took this little trip on purpose to meet you and make your acquaintance. Heerd of you, and thought we'd like to know you. Got some friends in common. How's Daniel Smith, and what's he doin' now-a-days?"

"Don't know no more about him than you do."

"You've seen him last, and we're pertikeralrly anxious about

his health and sperits. We shall be obleeged to prick your memory, till you recollect jest what we want to know. Stop, my friends, this is a nice, quiet place to have a little talk. Our injured feller-citizen here, too, is coming round ag'in, and wonderin' how he came to meet with that little accident. Whar' did you say Smith was at last accounts?"

"If you'll let us off, we'll tell you all we know. We ain't anxious to visit Lexington in this style. Say, will you promise to let us off?"

"That's accordin' to how few lies you tell. If we like your answers, we'll do the fair thing by you. Whar' did you say Smith was?"

"He went straight to Texas as soon as he broke jail."

The click of a pistol and the look of their captor's eyes were both unpleasant.

"None of that, Jim Bunker. Now, what I want of you, is jest this—to tell us what Dan Smith has done with the young lady he stole from B—— settlement three weeks ago. If you don't tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I'll blow your soul out of your body in less'n two minutes."

The fellow started when he heard his name called; he had not suspected that he was known by his antagonist; he glanced uneasily at him and at his companion, the seeming parson, who sat now, clenching his pistol, his teeth pressed hard into his lips, and his face as white as marble: fixed to obtain the knowledge which yet he dreaded to hear, with a doubt and agony which strained every heart-string to bear.

It was evident to the two who watched him that the man hesitated whether to lie or not. Fear that Bill might already possess knowledge which would betray a falsehood, if he attempted it, and send a bullet to silence it, mingled with the desire to evade or prevaricate.

"You don't mean to say that the girl isn't safe back home long ago?" he inquired, looking sharply at Bill.

"No questions—I'll ax them myself. All I want is answers," returned Bill, not caring to give him a clue as to how much he did or did not know. "Where is Miss Ringgold?"

"Well, if she isn't home, I haven't the least idea where she can be. I supposed she'd made her way home shortly after she run away."

"She did not run away. She was taken away in a wagon against her will, by two men, one of whom was you, Jim Bunker. I'm gittin' mad at the way you tell your story. I shall be dangerous if you get me any madder."

"I don't know as thar's any use in lyin' about it," continued the fellow, getting frightened. "I hain't made much out of the job at the best. Smith hasn't paid me what he promised,

because the girl got away, so I've run the resks for not'kin'?" "What'll you give if I peach on Smith?"

"The girl got away!" echoed Will Wood, leaning forward, the blood rushing up into his face, his eyes fixed upon the speaker's.

"Look out, Will, for your prisoner—he's a mind to take you," suddenly exclaimed Bill, knocking up with his rifle the outstretched arm of the other prisoner, who, in Wood's utter forgetfulness of every thing but the fate of the woman he loved, had quickly and quietly attempted to seize his pistols.

"Don't be so oneasy, old fellow; you're as safe as a b'ar in a trap."

"She did get away?" continued Will, hardly withdrawing his eyes an instant to the danger which had threatened himself.

"Don't you be in too big a hurry, my friend. You take car' of your game, and I'll ax the questions," said Bill, with a warning glance to him not to lose all by imprudent exposure of his ignorance of her whereabouts. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Jim Bunker, I'll treat you fair and square. If your account of things is satisfactory, we'll give you all the money we've got in hand, and let you go scot free—only you'll have to keep us company, give up your knives, and ride alongside until we think it time to part. It's none of your business what I know about the young lady—all I want of you is to tell us what happened while you had her in keepin'—and be kerful, for, as I said, I'm gettin' a little wrathy."

"I agree to the terms," replied the prisoner, as he well might for he saw that himself and friends were powerless, while the reputation of Bill Longlegs for courage and daring were sufficient to inspire him with dread; he had expected nothing less than instant death, or to be delivered up to the authorities of Lexington, and the change in his prospects was sufficient to raise his spirits. "Dan'l hasn't used me jest right, and I'd about as soon peach on him as to eat my supper. You see, he was awful mad at Miss Ringgold for giving him the mitten, and for laughing at him when he was took past her house with his face to the hoss-tail—"

"Yes, he cut a very pretty picter," chuckled Bill. "I meant he should."

"And he swore to be revenged. On you, too, Bill Longlegs, so's you better take car' of yourself on dark nights and in lonesome places, for Dan Smith isn't one to forgit."

"Much oblieged to ye for the warnin', but I reckon I didn't stand in no pertikeler need of it."

"I think myself that Dan'l's the one as better look out. I expect he'll tak' my ha'r off, yet, for this little bit of confidence I'm

giving you; but's I've got to run the resk, one way or t'other, I reckon I'll take the longest chance. Well, he know'd you was keeping a sharp look-out for him, ever sence he broke jail; and he had such a respeck for your eyes that he didn't exactly like to ventur' too close in that vicinity himself, so he hired Lewis and me to hang about the squire's till we got a chance at kick nappin' the young lady. We thought it a ticklish job; but he promise'd us a thousand dollars down, as soon as she was in his hands, and that set us up to try it. We was to get her through to Maysville, where he was to be with a boat-load of stuff which he was to take to Cincinnati, when he would take the girl aboard, carry her along with him, and when he got to Cincinnati get a priest to marry 'em. You know Dan'l passed for a very respectable and first-family gentleman till that little affair of the horse-stealing, though there was some of us in his confidence who knew him better; and he swore that Sallie Ringgold had got to share his disgrace by bein' his wife, sence it was her father and lover who'd helped to break him up. He thought it likely, after she'd once married him, her father, bein' such a high-feelin' old gentleman, would get him cl'ar of the charge of stealin', and make it out he was all right, and he'd come in good time, into the old fellow's money and estates. He even went so far as to calkilate how many niggers he was going to put on the squire's plantation, and he said he'd offer to buy or hire William Wool, and work him 'long with the rest."

"Never mind the curlycues; give us the straight story, Jim."

"Wal, we hung about as we agreed, and the afternoon sile went to a neighbor's to stay a spell, we thought likely it might be dark before she started home; so one of us kept watch, and t'other got the horses and wagon which we kept in the woods for the purpose, and drove along to the holler in the road, where we waited till she come along. She thought we was stopping to water the team, and was walking briskly by; we let her pass and then jest clapped a comforter over her mouth, tied her hands with a handkercher, passed her into the wagon, threw a b'ar skin over her, and drove off for the wilderness. We had a barrel and some bags aboard for an excuse; and when we met anybody, we drove slow, but kept a good hold of the young lady's mouth. As soon as it got late enough to be in no danger of travelers, and after we'd struck onto the Muddy Creek Bottom road, which is lonesome enough for our trade, we untied her mouth and made her as comfortable as we could: we had straw in the wagon, and plenty of b'ar-skins to keep her from freezin'. She cried and took on so, and begged so hard to be taken back, that we almost give up the job; but a thousand dollars was a big lump, and we jest tried to soothe her, tellin' her she wan't goin' to be harmed, but only to be married to a nice chap as would make her a good husband,

"Afore daybreak we reached the house we was to stop at through the day, kept by people reg'larly engaged in our business. There Miss Ringgold was shut up in a room and kept locked close; she behaved very bad about eatin' and all that, doin' nothin' but cry and hurt herself trying to get away. Dan had promised to meet us here, if he possibly could; if not we were to try to get to Maysville the next night. I hoped he'd come, for I was tired of the job; but he didn't, and that evening we started on. We tied her hands, but we didn't fasten her feet, for it was cold, and we thought they'd freeze if she had to keep em so still. Lewis drove and I held on to her arm. We thought she'd get worried out, for bimeby she dropped asleep; her head hung down so uncomfortable, I jest fixed a piller of b'ar-skins and spread one over her in the bottom of the wagon; and then I s'pose I must have drowsed a little myself, for when I roused up, and felt about for the girl, she wasn't there! She'd played a sharp trick, purtending to be asleep, and as soon as my hold on her arm eased off, she jest crawled softly out the back end of the wagon and let us go on without her. We had a lantern with us; and so soon as we found out what had happened, we took it out of the barrel where it was hid, turned back and searched the road carefully, each side, for a long ways. She couldn't have been gone more'n half an hour, but I'll swear we couldn't find a track of her nowhars. We looked for her more'n half the night, and it wasn't the thousand dollars half so much as it was 'cause we didn't want her to freeze and starve to death in the woods, and be eat up alive by the wild varmints, with her hands tied up so she couldn't even try to help herself. She must have hated Dan Smith awfully to be willin' to take up with the b'ars instead of him."

"Go on," said Will Wood, smothering an inward groan.

"Thar' ain't much more to tell. We scoured the woods round about all the next day, but we see'd no signs of the girl. Then we pushed on to tell Smith of the news; he was t'aring mad, and wouldn't give us a dollar for all our trouble. I think he felt troubled about Miss Ringgold, too; he thought too much of her to want her to go wanderin' round and dyin' in such an onpleasant manner. He immejitly set off to try and find her, but he was obleegeed to be car'ful about showing himself; and he sent me back to hang around B—— to know if she got back thar'. I stayed around more'n a week, and then——"

While the party had been telling and listening to this story, their horses had been standing still on the road, where the trees towered up and branched over so as to make a deep shadow. Not far ahead the road turned and ran in an oblique direction, being hidden by the forest from their view. Around this bend there now appeared another party of two horsemen coming from the direction of Lexington.

The keen eye of Bill Longlegs, as they approached nearer, saw enough to make him suspect that the one on the right, with the woolen comforter drawn round his face up to his eyes, and the cap drawn down to them, so as to entirely conceal his features, was Dan Smith. If so, he of course immediately recognized his friends and fellow-conspirators, but did not know in what manner to approach them until informed who the addition to their company might be. He began to whistle two or three bars of Yankee Doodle, which was probably a signal asking if they were friends or enemies. The man who had been knocked down by Bill's rifle was now sitting on his horse completely disarmed, and his feet tied by a rope passing around its body. They were some distance from the spot where the pistols of the others had been knocked into the underbrush. Bill watched the men's countenances to see what they would do under the new aspect of affairs. If they returned the signal they would be instantly shot; if they did *not*, when the others came nearer they would observe the predicament, and a battle might ensue, in which case there was great probability they would lose the reward promised them for the confessions just made.

"Lay low, boys," said Jim Bunker, who had been the leader through the whole act.

At that moment the strangers came alongside, giving the greeting of the day to the party, and looking scrutinizingly at the condition of the one who was tied to his horse, and at the couple whom they did not recognize.

"Have you got that chap in custody?" asked a voice through the muffler, which was known to all. "What's he been doing?"

"Oh, nuthin'; he fell off his horse and hurt himself," said Jim Bunker. "These friends of ours are going the same way we are. Come from Lexington?"

"Yes; *it's a right smart place.*"

"Yes; *business is good there.*"

"Going to stay there long?"

"Not this time. Will be back on this route to-morrow."

"Seems to me the parson has got in bad company," laughed the speaker, without the most distant idea of who he was really speaking to.

"You think right, there, Dan Smith!" cried the parson, in a voice so intense with passion that even then the villain did not recognize it. "I've been wanting to see you for the last three weeks;" and before any hand could interpose, or—the victim himself was aware of his danger, he raised his pistol and fired, and Dan rolled to the ground, apparently dead.

sooner his passage would be performed. And to this end our friend went to see his half-brother and cousin, who, though now separated by a wide gulf, were yet in close sympathy with each other, and had been for many years in constant communication.

CHAPTER VI.

UNEXPECTED EVENTS.

WITHIN a week after the events described in the last chapter William Wood found himself in a singular position. Incarcerated in the jail at Lexington, awaiting his trial as the murderer of Daniel Smith, if his white face had suddenly turned into a black one, the community could not have more completely changed their opinions with regard to his physical attributes than they now had his moral ones. He had just three friends in the world—or, if he had a fourth one, he was not aware of it—his mother, Bill Longlegs and Joseph Hamilton Daviess. The kindly and grateful feelings of Squire Ringgold, and even of his wife, had suddenly turned into the bitterest hatred and anger. A spirit of persecution had been roused in the neighborhood—the stone had been thrown into the sea of public sentiment, and the circle spread in broad and broader radius until the outmost verges of the State felt the remote agitation.

The process by which this had been brought about was as curious as the result. During that encounter in the wilderness, after firing upon his enemy and seeing him fall from his horse, a feeling of remorse had suddenly seized upon him, yet he felt that if ever, under any circumstances, the taking of human life was justifiable, the villain had forfeited his to the man whom he had not only once caused to be arrested and placed in jeopardy, but who had with heartless malignity plotted the misery of the innocent and beautiful girl whose death, in all probability, had already been the end of his revenge. The thought of Sallie Ringgold, alone, at midnight, her arms bound, battling with darkness, cold, fright, perishing slowly from exhaustion, or more terribly sudden from the assault of some ferocious wild animal, tore his heart, fired his blood, maddened him. He could not face the man who had been guilty of this horror without inflicting upon him a summary punishment—he would have been less, or more, than a man to have done so. And any community, knowing the character of the person killed, and the provocation, would have justified and honored him, especially a people like the settlers of Kentucky, full of valor and fire, appreciating courage, and not given to standing on the forms of law, whose execution they so often took into their own hands.

It was only Will's education by his gentle-hearted father

the influence of which was strong enough to make him regret the deed. But his friend Bill, though not quite ready himself to deal the avenging blow, as soon as it was dealt, exulted as he would have done at the death of a panther whose prowlings were a source of danger to good people.

"You've made short work of it, Will," he exclaimed; and with one of his quick, unexpected movements, he disarmed Dan's fellow-traveler, who had drawn a large bowie-knife at the first symptom of a fight. "And now, my good friends, as I promised you not to take you to jail, and to pay you this money for information, I keep my word. But look out! if ever I meets one of you after this you'll have to keep your eyes skinned. Have you sech a thing as a pistol with you?" he asked of the last comer; "not bein' willin' to take your word, I must take a leetle look myself, if you'll excuse me."

Finding no other arms upon him than the pair nature gave him, he let him go, threw the roll of three hundred dollars to Jim Bunker, turned his horse and rode off.

"Come on, Will, this way. The word we've got has caused me to change my course. We must make for Muddy-Creek Bottom this afternoon. Far'-ye-well, thieves and robbers. Better pick up your captain, and if he ain't quite dead, finish him, and give his body to his brother painters. *They'll* give him the only kind of burial he desarves. Far'-ye-well, and keep off the track of Bill Longlegs if you don't want to be sp'iled so you won't keep."

As the two friends rode along together, they did not think as much of the deed which had been done, nor of the company which they left behind them, as they did of Sallie Ringgold. Will had thought and said that it would be a relief to him to know that she was dead, instead, as he feared, the victim of Dan Smith's revenge; but now that it appeared almost certain that she was indeed dead, he wondered how he could have felt so hopeful as he did before. The restlessness which had possessed him, the pain which only found relief in constant effort and action, changed into a dull despondency. Great tears, such as men seldom shed, but which, when they do, tell of a voiceless agony, rolled, one after the other, slowly down his cheeks. He did not hear half of Bill's talk, who, on his part, seemed roused to fresh hope and resolution.

"Three weeks! and no tidin's heerd in no way! and them men out in every direction s'archin' and lookin' after her! it's bad—moughly bad! the weather was bitter cold about that time. I remember I was afeerd the square would freeze to death them nights he was out tryin' to find her. I was used to it, and didn't mind it: but Lord-a-massy, if Miss Sallie was out then—" Here he perceived the tears which were dripping out of Will's strong eyes, and changed his tactics.

"It's three weeks, to be sure; but she may be alive and safe for all that. I sartingly am inclined to believe she is! I seem to kinder feel it in my ribs. I've heerd tell of merackulous es-
capes, and all that, and I've known some. She may have strayed on till she come to some backwoods cabin, and be sick thar' and unable to send us word. 'Tain't impossible. Will, my boy, it's put water on my powder to see you cry. I shan't be able to go off if the old flint-lock gets damp," his sharp, queer voice quivering a little. "I tell you I'm moughty sartain she'll come out all right yet."

"Never, Bill. I know she's dead, as plainly as if I saw her."

"Talk and turpentine! you don't know no such thing. And if she is, and the b'ars haven't eat her up, let's find that poor child's corpse and give it a Christian burial;" and he drew his sleeve across his eyes. "But she *ain't* dead, I tell ye, and I'm goin' to find her."

"It'll do no good."

"Ef you really think so, you needn't go along. I don't think it's best, anyways. You ought to go back to B—— and let the squire and her mother know what we've found out. You can come on, and bring her father along, if you feel like it, to jine in the search. I'll go over every foot of ground for forty miles square but I'll at least find her bones—poor girl!"

William continued on for a while in moody silence; then, with an effort, he rallied his voice and thoughts.

"Of course, as long as there is the remotest hope of finding any thing which will give us a clue to her ultimate fate, I shall not cease the search. But I think as you do, that one of us ought to go to her distressed parents; and since you are so much more familiar with the woods, and so much better calculated to do just the best thing in the right place, I resign that duty to you. If I meet any one going toward B—— who will carry my message, I shall then turn back and hasten after you. I can strike the Muddy Creek Bottom road, at a place about eighteen miles this side of B——. If I do not meet any one, I shall immediately return, as soon as I have seen the family."

"Wal, here's our place of parting. Thar's a trail here which few people are acquainted with; but it answers my purpose, and will save me full twenty miles travel. I shall look for you day-after-to-morrow." He turned off through an open country which took him over hills, valleys and streams into the great forest which loomed on the horizon a few miles distant.

With a "God bless you, Bill," William Wood continued his way back to B——, arriving there in the latter part of the night.

The next morning early, he was prepared, with the squire, for the sad business of continuing the search, but they had only

ridden a few miles on their way, when their course was interrupted by a party of men, and the sheriff of Lexington arrested the younger man on a charge of attempted murder of Daniel Smith, who was now lying at the point of death, from a pistol-shot through the neck and shoulder at the hands of William Wood. Conscious of the justice of the act, and that any jury in the land would admit it, when the circumstances were properly placed before them, the young man would hardly have cared for the arrest, had it not been that it interrupted the work which he had at heart. At this time it was awful. He felt as if he could not submit to it. To be shut up in a prison, helpless to aid or to act, with nothing to do but wait in the blackness of despair—now, when his nerves were wrought to their utmost tension by sorrow and harrowing doubts—the blow stung him to resistance.

He was so unwise as to attempt to evade the arrest. Putting spurs to his horse, he galloped off, heedless of the shower of bullets which flew after him. At that moment he could better have met death than this delay. The shots none of them touched his person, but one of them wounded his horse, so that he soon fell into the hands of his pursuers.

The story which was then and there told to Squire Ringgold was of a kind to turn that rather weak-minded gentleman from the road to Muddy Creek Bottom; so that Bill Longlegs was left to continue his explorations without any of the expected assistance.

The dying testimony of Daniel Smith had been taken; and the circulation of its statements was as rapid as eager feet and tongues could make it. There was much matter in it such as popular excitement loves to feed upon; that which was most tough and indigestible was precisely that which it swallowed most easily. The very boldness and audacity of this testimony, given, too, by a man upon his death-bed, took the common belief by storm. It must be all false or all true—and of course it must be all true—a dying man tells the truth—generally.

The testimony was about to the following effect:

William Wood had been a persistent enemy of his for some time. He had not known of any reason, except jealousy, both of them being suitors of Miss Sallie Ringgold. Wood, finding that the superior fortune and advantages of the other were gaining him the preference, had slandered him to the lady, and by undermining her confidence in his (Smith's) character, had himself gained an unfair advantage in the suit. That about this time he (Smith) had learned positive facts with regard to Wood's habits and pursuits—had detected him in the very act of stealing a pair of horses from his employer, the father of the lady; that he, feeling it to be his duty, had caused Wood to be arrested,

who, by dint of ineffable lying, had turned the charge upon him, and thereby not only endangered his life at the hands of a mob, but had deeply injured his character in the community. That he (Smith) at that time had been compelled, to save himself from immediate death at the hands of this mob, to make a pretended confession implicating others, all of which confession he now withdrew, begging the forgiveness of those he had thus injured. That Miss Sallie Ringgold, having cause to doubt William Wood, had then refused the immediate marriage which he pressed; that he had then gone to Frankfort, having pretended to resign her; but this pretension was only a ruse to give him an opportunity to plan and execute the base plot by which he afterward kidnapped the unhappy girl and took her off doubtless with the purpose of compelling her to marry him, so that he might come in for a share of the wealth and family position of the Ringgolds. That Wood knew that he (Smith) suspected him, and was taking every step to trace his villanies that he might betray them to the proper authorities; so that when he was riding out from Lexington with two or three of his friends, upon encountering Wood and his confederate, Bill Mixon, *alias* Longlegs, in disguise, and stopping to exchange travelers' greeting with them, not knowing who they were, he, William Wood, had suddenly drawn a pistol and shot him, without a word of warning; to the truth of all which the witness deposed, etc.

This certainly was shifting the load of crime from one pair of shoulders to another with considerable agility. There were plenty of witnesses to swear that it belonged where it now rested; the four men who were present at the time of the assault had a story of their own to tell, when the trial should come off, which was as unfavorable to the prisoner as falsehoods could make it.

There was a secret undercurrent at work to swell the torrent of popular indignation. It will be remembered that Daniel Smith was of a good family; his connections were only too glad to shake off the stigma he had fixed upon them, and attach it to a poor and friendless young man. They eagerly seized upon this opportunity to exculpate their relative, and were bitter in their persecution of his assassin. It will also be remembered that persons of seeming respectability had been implicated in Daniel Smith's confession; all these, of course, were anxious to exonerate themselves and convict another. The whole band of lawless persons, with whom he was linked, made it their interest to avenge his death, should he die, or to establish his innocence of past misdeeds, should he recover. Among these were many who commanded money and interest. Altogether, the current promised to be too strong for one unaided

arm to breast. Of all this, Will was for some time in ignorance. He thought not, cared not, for himself. He paced the narrow limits of his cell, wrought up almost to insanity, by the suspense and forced inaction in which he was kept. Oh, torture! to be shut up—caged like some infernal beast—and the girl he loved involved in such uncertain and terrible circumstances. Sometimes he would fancy her lying frozen, like a marble statue, as in life, the lids closed over the sweet brown eyes, the soft ringlets flowing over her cheek and bosom, her face turned to the compassionate heavens above, on some desolate hillside. Again he shuddered as he pictured Bill Longlegs coming upon some torn remnant of her clothing, or finding her bones gnawed by the stealthy wolves. It was a relief to him to look through the bars of his windows up to the sky, and believe that she was leaning out of heaven to comfort and assure him. If she really were dead, he felt that he should be indifferent to the result of the coming trial; if he were convicted and executed, it would be a quick path to Sallie's side. Yet Will was young, and the love of life is strong in all; he did not always feel so desperate.

In the mean time Daniel Smith was being exalted into a martyr. Lying day after day at the point of death, in one of the Lexington hotels, a casual observer would have said that the life of some excellent and beneficent citizen must have been jeopardized, to judge from the solicitude of the people, particularly the women.

During the first week of his imprisonment no friend came near Will, except his mother, who begged a ride in a wagon that was coming, and who was the first to inform him of the nature of the stories which were afloat. The poor old lady, without money to pay her board in a strange place, but determined to be near her son, hired herself out at one of the hotels to do light housework, mending, and keeping rooms in order. She told him a few of the various rumors which flew about, and that she thought the squire's family had become prejudiced against him; but this he could not and would not believe until a visit from the squire himself forced upon him the fact.

When Squire Ringgold entered his room, Will sprung forward, one thought only in his heart and on his lips:

"Have you heard from Sallie?"

Then it was that he was amazed and stupefied by the high-tempered gentleman's bursting forth with a volley of blasting epithets, ending in a harrowing appeal to him, to have at least the mercy, now that his guilt was known, to tell her broken-hearted parents, her gray-haired mother, what he had done with Sallie and where she was. Scornful silence was the only answer he had to this appeal. He would not stoop to deny this

charge; and had he done so, of what avail would it have been? So the squire went forth, set to achieve the punishment of the heartless scoundrel; the storm of popular fury rose and swelled higher and fiercer, threatening to culminate in that frequent tragedy of the West in those days—the summary execution of the criminal at the hands of a mob; but the firmness of the jailer, and the influence of a few law-abiding citizens, prevented this catastrophe.

CHAPTER VII.

BILL MIXON AT HOME.

IT was a clear day in the early part of January, not very cold, but brisk and exhilarating. The snow had melted off from the open country, but lay in patches under the trees in the shelter of the forest. In the depths of one of the wildest wildernesses of Kentucky, upon the trunk of a fallen tree, sat Bill Longlegs, lost in a fit of musing. He was dressed in hunter's shirt and breeches, with the addition of a leather jacket, which the present inclement season demanded; a powder-horn defended from the belt which held his knife and tobacco-pouch; across his back was slung a light wallet, containing several days' rations of dried venison and crackers. In his hand he held an article of woman's dress—a little checked-gingham apron—soiled now with the snow and rain and dropping leaves which had fallen upon it. Ah! how well he remembered those coquettish aprons, with the two little pockets, ruffled or scalloped about, which he had so much admired! From this one he had drawn a handkerchief and a silver thimble, each one of them marked, "S. R." His head drooped forward upon his other hand as he gazed sadly upon this first token of the vicinity of the spot in which Sallie Ringgold had met her fate, whatever that fate had been.

It was now over a month since her disappearance; the apron, soiled and weather-beaten, had evidently lain a long time where he had discovered it. Days of such vigilant and keen investigation as only one trained, like himself, to the life of a trapper and hunter, could have carried out, had at length betrayed to him, in this hidden recess of the forest, this evidence that the lost girl had once been over this ground. It was full fifteen miles back from the Muddy Creek Bottom road, where her kidnappers had professed that she left the wagon. He conjectured that she had purposely, after it became light enough for her to see, the morning of her escape, plunged further and

further into the woods, anxious rather to encounter its dangers than again to face the men, who, she must know, would linger about the place of her flight as long as there was any prospect of discovering her. They might have crossed her track again and again, while she, by lying behind logs or creeping into thickets, could have evaded them. Thus she might have gone on for the first day, until night again closed about her in her desolate and perilous situation. That she could endure, for over twenty-four or forty-eight hours, the accumulated horrors of cold, hunger, fatigue and fright he could not believe. Himself tough as the trees and animals of the woods he frequented, he yet shuddered at the fear and suffering which the gentle and delicate girl must have endured. Full of gloom, he sat on the log, staring at the apron, thinking of the child's mother, of Will Wood, and gritting his teeth as he recalled the pistol-shot of Will's which had probably sent the worker of so much sorrow to the grave where his dark heart could plot no more malice.

"He didn't deserve such an easy death. He oughter have been cut up alive and used to bait b'ars. Its cur'ous the squire and Will don't get along! It's eight days now I've been expectin' they'd jine me. Either somethin's up, or they don't one of 'em car' enough about Sallie to to try to bury her bones. Poor Sallie! the sight of this 'ere little article makes me feel like a b'ar-baby when its mother is shot. I could cry as easy as not. Ef thar' was a sign of a cabin, or anybody known to be livin' in these woods, I'd s'arch 'em out, and find if she got took up and taken car' of by anybody. But thar' ain't. Probably when she wanted to get back to the road, she didn't know the way, and went further and further into the forest, till she jest laid down and died, or got devoured alive. It's forty miles, a straight streak, out of this woods any way but the Muddy Creek road, and she's never sot foot on that since the hour she slipped away from those blasted catamounts. The man that's mean enough to hire out, for a thousand dollars, to trap a young girl and carry her off, is too mean to shoot. But if I come across that Jim Bunker ag'in, I'll whip him to death by inches! I wish I had him in these woods! I'd tie him up to a tree so's he couldn't stir head nor foot, and leave him to see how he liked it. I'd give him a little of the same dose he gave her. Poor child! I'll find nothin' but her bones, at the best, for the wild varmints must have devoured her up long ago."

So deeply was he absorbed in his feelings, that for once the ears and eyes of the hunter were not so a'ert as usual; the rustling of dry leaves and the heavy trot of a passing animal were unheard by him, until a she-hear, with a racc'oon in her mouth, jogged along, not ten feet from him. So motionless

had he sat that he was entirely unobserved by her; it was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and she was evidently returning, in a cheerful mood, to her cubs, with a supply of meat for their supper. Bill instinctively reached for the rifle which leaned against the log by his side; the motion attracted her attention; she slackened her trot to stare at him in undisguised surprise, and then, with a grunt, which to the hunter sounded rather scornful, took up her way again without further display of interest.

"I reckon she don't know who I am, or her ladyship wouldn't be so slightin' in her remarks," muttered he, looking after her. "She isn't awar' that I've got a pile of five b'arskins sence I come into these parts, eight days ago. *Hello!*" he shouted, to the retreating bruin, "can't you stop to let a person introduce hisself? I'm Bill Longlegs, of Bourbon county, at your service, and my perfession is, death on b'ars.

"I thought *that* would be enough to make her take to her heels," he continued, as the bear, startled by his voice, trotted on at a quicker rate. Thrusting the apron into his bosom, the hunter started in pursuit, but before he could overtake her, the animal had reached her den, which appeared to be a sort of cave, and disappeared within.

For an instant Bill forgot all about Sallie Ringgold and his trouble on her account. The passions of the hunter were roused; his face lighted up with eagerness and pleasure; there was a fight, and perhaps danger in prospect. Not that one bear would have been considered by him as any match for himself, his trusty rifle and his knife; but there might be two bears within the den, or the mate might be in the vicinity and come suddenly upon him, while engaged with the other. He knew the habits of the bear too well to expect that she would come out again that night; but she might be expected to attempt a foray in the morning. The recent moderate weather, which was daily getting warmer, had aroused these brutes from their indolence, and sent them roaming about, with keen cravings after something more substantial than sucking their own paws. This had been the reason of his having crossed the path of several during his visit to the wilderness.

He immediately resolved to camp that night in sight of the den, in a spot where he could command its outlet, but where he would be unseen by the bear, when she should emerge. While the sun was throwing its slanted arrows through the bare branches of the trees, he reconncitered the entrance. His eye was suddenly attracted by an object which sent all the glow out of his face. It was a little strip of brown merino fluttering from a blackberry bush which grew out of the earth in a crevice of rock at the mouth of the den. The sight of

that witness there almost paralyzed him. Fully as he believed that Sallie had met her death in some such manner, this brought it home to his conviction with appalling force.

"I'm a-gwine into that cubby-hole, if it kills me," he soliloquized, when the effects of the first shock passed away. "If she's been dragged in thar' it's altogether likely I'll find some remnants of her clothing in the young-uns' nest—sumthin' that'll be conclusive, and put a stop to this s'arch of mine. It'll be better to wait till the mother comes out and kill her outside—less risk than in goin' in thar' on onsartainties. I'll have to put it off till to-morrow, if I do, and I can't wait. No! I might as well try to sleep settin' on the sharp end of a stick. I'm gwine in thar' in less'n an hour—if I don't may I be chawed up like a plug of tobacker," and he thrust a huge quid into his mouth and worked away upon it, imagining how it would feel to be treated in a like manner.

He was, however, compelled to give up the adventure for that night, greatly to his chagrin. It was necessary for him to obtain some pine-knot torches before venturing into the cave, as without light he would be at the mercy of his adversary or adversaries as the case might be. It was some time before he could find a tree suited to his wants, and by the time he had cut the flambeaux and prepared them, it was too dark for him to attempt his rash purpose; the swift twilight of winter had settled upon the earth; the utter darkness of the inner depths of a great wilderness crept about him.

Bill prepared himself for the night's rest as quietly as if turning down the coverlids of a snug bed in a civilized habitation. Gathering together a pile of dry brushwood, with the huge trunk of a tree for a back-log, he took out his tinder-box, and soon had the beginning of a fine fire. While he sat and warmed his feet at this, he ate of the contents of his wallet, finding some water in a little hollow which had caught the melted snow, and was now thinly crusted with ice. In the place of tea or coffee he consoled himself with a draught of whisky from the canteen of his belt—a sparing draught, for Bill Longlegs never impaired the vigor of his nerves and steadiness of his hand by too free use of the corn-juice, for which his native country was famous. Then gathering an armful of hemlock-boughs, he threw them down beside the fire, and himself upon them. He knew that the fire was a good sentinel to keep off night-prowlers; one hand was on the hilt of his knife, and the other touched his rifle. Although no fear disturbed him, he lay long awake, gazing into the crackling, sparkling fire with thoughtful eyes; often he raised upon his elbow and looked about him; that bit of brown merino had ruined his night's repose; he was impatient for morning.

It might have been two or three o'clock, after midnight; the fire had burned low, but suddenly it flashed up anew, throwing up a shower of sparks, and casting a bright light into the vistas of the forest. Bill saw advancing toward him something unearthly and ethereal; it had the form of a woman, clothed in white garments. As it drew nearer, he recognized Sallie Ringgold; she was quite close to him; looked at him beseechingly, and said: "Do not look any longer for me. Go to William;" then, as she seemed about to turn back into the darkness, he started up, stretching out his hand to detain her, and found himself wide awake. He had been dreaming. It was some moments before he could convince himself of this; then he gathered more brush and heaped upon the fire, and sitting before it, leaned his elbows on his knees. He could sleep no more that night. Like all of his class, Bill, with all his fierce courage, was superstitious; he believed, not that he had dreamed, but that he had seen a spirit. Sallie was dead, and had appeared to him to tell him this, that he might waste no more hope or time upon her; but what was the meaning of the rest of her message? Did danger beset William Wood, or was it only that she wished him to tell her lover that she was indeed a spirit? It was strange that William had not joined him on this expedition; it might be that some unexpected peril had fallen upon him. In thoughts and conjectures like these the hours slipped slowly away, until the hunter was glad to welcome the first glimmer of dawn.

"I'm gwine to mind you, Miss Sallie, for I ain't the person to gainsay a sperit," he mused, as he trimmed off the pine-knots. "But I've got that little job to attend to first; I'm gwine to see if you've left any tokens in that b'ar's nest. Arter that I'll go to William, if you like."

After eating his breakfast, he reconnoitered the place again, placing a piece of venison and some sugar a little outside the mouth of the den. He then sought a position in which he could be in full view of the den, while himself hidden from observation. Here he watched for some hours. At length he was rewarded for his long vigil by seeing the bear appear at the mouth of the cave; but the scent, which had detected the venison and sugar, also detected the steps which had placed them there; and before he could get his rifle into range, she retreated out of sight. All day long he patiently kept up the tiresome guard, and was expecting a second night of anxiety, when, just after sunset, the bear ventured out. She rose up on her feet when she got out, snuffing the air suspiciously, but perceiving no indications of intruders, and eager for the bait which had tempted her, she walked slowly toward it. She now afforded the hunter a full opportunity of sighting his rifle at her heart; the next instant he had fired, the ball passing in back of

her fore-shoulder. She fell heavily, rolling over: and Bill, taking it for granted that he had killed her, drew his bowie-knife and advanced upon her. To all appearance she was dead; but he was too old a hunter not to make sure of this before he ventured into the midst of unknown dangers. He thrust his knife into her neck, which no sooner touched her, than she leaped up and seized his legs in her huge paws. Bill acknowledged to himself that he was in a predicament. In the grasp of a desperately-wounded bear, whose teeth were even then closing in his flesh, his knife wrenched from his hand, rolling upon the ground with his antagonist, who was using teeth and claws in all the fury of pain and rage, it must have been instinct more than courage which aided him in that perilous instant.

"Dod blast the everlasting nigger varmint, if she ain't actelly goin' at me with my own weapons!" thought Bill, as, opening his eyes, which had involuntarily closed, he saw the bear over him with his bowie-knife clenched in her great snapping teeth. It was fortunate that her madness was expended upon that, instead of upon his throat; the next breath she dropped it, but Bill had it, and with the strength which the crisis demanded, he plunged it into her heart, turning and twisting it there, until her claws relaxed, and with a blind spasmodic thrust of her paw, she rolled over and expired. Bruised and bleeding, the hunter arose and shook himself.

"Couldn't quite come it, could ye? Oughter know better than to have tried yer hand with Bill Longlegs. Come moughty nigh makin' my legs shorter by about two-feet-an'-a-half; should have to change my name, if you'd bit a *leetle* harder. Say, now, can't yer be perlite and offer a friend a seat?" and sitting on the warm carcass, he took a swallow of liquor, for he found himself somewhat weak; washed out his wounds with whisky, tied up the leg which was the worst lacerated, with his handkerchief, and after a few moments' rest, lighted his torch and prepared to explore the lair of the slain brute.

This was a business neither easy nor pleasant; he had to crawl on his hands and knees along the passage, which, after a few feet, enlarged itself into a eave, five or six feet wide, and high enough for him to stand erect. Along this he advanced, knife in hand; his torch, flaring and smoking, threw a red glare before him, enabling him to distinguish, when he had gone forward a short distance, the bear's nest. He was not sorry to discover that the father of the two little fellows nestled there was absent; for in his present condition, he was willing to forego the glory of killing two bears of an afternoon. The cubs were very young; the first he slew, as he came up to them, with a thrust of his knife; but Bill's heart was too tender for the work of hurting that which was young and helpless, if it was the

little beginning of his natural enemy, "*a b'ar*," so he picked up the other snarling and scratching cub, rubbed its head, gave it a piece of sugar, tied a piece of rope about its leg, and by a sort of magnetism peculiar to himself, soon had it quiet and obedient.

By the lurid flare of the pine knot he then proceeded to investigate every foot of the cavern for some remnant of Miss Ringgold's clothing—a lock of hair, or any token which could testify to others that she had fallen a prey to the beast upon whom he had just wreaked vengeance—a miserable consolation in such a case, but one that made Bill set his teeth together hard as he thought of it. There was nothing in that horrid lair to corroborate his suspicions. He looked closely, as even a button or a pin might bear its silent testimony; but he found nothing which had ever belonged to a human being. The cave extended beyond the nest of the bears, in a narrow, irregular form, more like a cleft in the earth than any thing else; and finally narrowed down into a similar opening to that through which he had worked his way in.

Resolved to pursue his adventure to the utmost, the hunter again went down upon his hands and knees, dragging the cub after him, and crawled along until he emerged into a rocky cave of good height, arched overhead as if by the hand of art, and opening out upon the side of a hill.

The sun was just sinking as he came out into this cavern, which was open to the weather on the western side. His sharp glance immediately detected the signs of a human habitation: still carrying his torch, which, however, he no longer needed, he crossed the rocky floor—wet with the drippings of a cascade, which in spring and fall probably hung a crystal door before the entrance—and reconnoitered the surroundings. He found himself looking down into an almost circular valley, not more than half a mile in diameter, filled nearly to the top by tall arrowy forest-trees, which had shot up to an unusual height as if with the effort to reach the light which fell more freely upon their hillside brothers. The hills which circled it broke off abruptly, going down precipitately into the valley, which, added to its regular shape, gave it an appearance which the hunter, with more truth than romance, described afterward as a "reg'lar kettle." Familiar as he was with the wilderness in that part of the State, he had never before stumbled upon this locality. He had time only to give it a glance, when his attention was attracted to the smoke issuing from the stick chimney of a small hut, not twelve feet from him, which was grounded on the rock, and partially supported by being built against one side of the cave. It was evidently no new habitation, for he saw a little spot of cultivated earth along the hillside, which had been a garden in

the summer. A pile of chopped wood, and other evidences of civilization, showed that it was neither the hut of Indians, nor the temporary refuge of some of the horse-thieves and counterfeitors who infested the State. A cow, protected from the storms by a shed of saplings, covered with bark, was eating her supper of corn-stalks a little distance beyond the cabin. For an instant Bill's heart leaped into his throat—what if Sallie had chanced upon this hidden home and been kindly received. Devoid of fear, as he was by nature, he did not pause to ask himself what manner of persons had thus purposely secluded themselves from all human society, and what reception they would give to a stranger intruding upon their domain. In three strides he was at the door, and after a hasty knock, pushed it open and looked in. If he had been one susceptible of fear he would certainly have been startled by the first objects which met his curious gaze.

As the door swung open he was confronted by a large negro, knife in hand—a savage-looking fellow, black as the ace of spades, dressed in the skins of wild animals, his brawny arms bare, and the knife held in one hand in a determined manner, which boded violence.

"Put down that ar' b'ar-slasher, and give us yer hand, neighbor," said Bill, in nowise abashed. "I'm a hunter, here in the woods, and have got a trifle out o' my reckonin'; 'sides I've jest let the sass out of an almighty spunky b'ar, and she's chawed my leg up, as if 'twan't nothin' better'n meat. I've got the baby here, though, and I mean to keep it and be a mamie to it; so's if you could give us a leetle milk we'd be much obleeged."

The honest smile of Bill's hardy face was usually irresistible; but the negro stared at him without answer, gradually allowing his knife to drop by his side.

"Now, Sampson, don't you be too cross, coz you haven' spoke to white folks for nigh on ten year; don' be shuttin' the door in a pusson's face that's got lost, and is in trouble. Min' what our Bible says—'Do good unto dose as use us bad.' Come in, sah."

The speaker was a woman, who rose up from the table at which they had been eating, a full-blooded negress, tall and well built, who, despite her strange dress of home manufacture, had a sort of queenliness in her mien, which looked as if her swarthy ancestors had been emperors along the Nile. Bill could not help bowing to her with the respect which her manner commanded.

"White man mus'n' set foot over my door-sill," answered the man, in the deep, thick voice of his race.

"Jes' as you like, neighbor," said Bill, "I don't often trouble

houses myself. Like sleepin' and eatin' out-of-doors. Ef you'll jest let your wife give me a drink of milk for cubby, it's all right. And by the way, don't you want a b'ar-skin, for a kiver-lid to your bed?—if you do, an'll come along with me and help peel the critter, you can have the skin—the meat too, if you want it."

For an instant the negro hesitated; but the good-natured generosity of the hunter was too much for his surliness; the fierce, suspicious, combative expression faded out into one of habitual melancholy.

"Come in, sah, and take some suppah wid us. Dinah didn't s'pect company, but she'll give you what she's got."

The hunter immediately stepped in, set his rifle in a corner, and laid his knife on the table to show his confidence in his entertainers; a block of wood was placed for him at the pine-board, which, running along the wall of the cabin, served for a table; he was given corn-cake and dried venison and a gourd filled with milk. There was butter and wild honey also. While he was eating, his eyes were busy taking in all the features of this singular habitation, and his mind in conjecturing the history of the strange couple into whose solitude he had intruded. The cabin was a good-sized room, and contained many articles of use and comfort, all manufactured, with care and toil, from the materials at hand. The bed was made of skins, like their clothing. Upon a little stand, in one corner, made, like the rustic tables in summer-houses, of the undressed limbs of trees, lay an old and worn copy of the New Testament. Cups, spoons and forks, carved out of the knots of hard wood, sufficed for their wants in that direction. Industry and ingenuity had combined in the construction of the hut and its furniture. There were two comfortable chairs, lined with deer-skin. But the inmates most interested the hunter. Their language and manners both betrayed them to be superior types of their class; and Bill was not long in coming to the conclusion that they were runaways from Virginia, who had settled down in this wild spot to avoid the possibility of being reclaimed; that they had been house-servants of the better kind; and that in losing them, their master had probably lost two of his highest-priced chattels. The man, now that his first excitement of mistrust and alarm was over, did not appear so repelling; he was of giant frame, and had a stern face, but it was neither brutal nor ferocious. His wife had also a sad expression, which in her face was softened by a mild temper—perhaps by Christian graces of character—as evinced in her first welcome of the stranger.

"Like they've been whipped, or separated, or had their pickaninnies sold, or suthin' to turn 'em ag'in white folks," mused

Bill. "Wal, I don't find fault with their taste. I reckon I'd rather be free to roam about as I like, with nothin' on 'arth but a pair of buckskin breeches and a rifle, than to be the President of the United States, and have to be shut up in the White House. I wish I knew jest how to find out if they'd seen any thing of Sallie Ringgold. Ef they *have*, and I come onto that ground too suddenly, I'll scare 'em off, and they'll be like a pair of frightened crows—'twon't do no good to scatter corn."

There were two doors to the cabin; the one at which he had entered, and another opposite the table, and toward which his back was now placed, which either led into a kind of anteroom, where the roughest implements of use and out-door labor were kept, or out into the shed where the cow was stabled. Bill was resolved to have a good look at the premises before he left them. In the mean time, while he finished his supper it grew dark out of doors.

"I've red you of a dangerous neighbor," he went on to say; "thar's a b'ar's nest back of you, in a cave leading into this, and it was goin' into that ar' nest that led me through into this unexpected locality. Them b'ars could have walked right through into your premises, any time. Do you kill 'em much?"

"Never wur so many around as thar' is dis wintah. Guess it's de cole wedder. I tell my wife it mus' be like Canada such cold wedder. I's labored under a pertikler diffikelty ever sence we settled here—dat was not to hab any rifle. Ef I had a gun, I could do well. But I's neber had any thing better dan dis knife. I mos'ly has to trap our meat; and sometimes we gets out. I tell Dinah, ef I had a gun we'd be *rich*."

"We'd be better off, honey, if you had a gun—but we've got a great many blessin's as it is. Eber sence dat cow come wanderin' off here, as if sent by special Providence, I's been satisfied. The more we has, the more we want, and ef you had a gun, Sampson, I s'pose you'd be jest as dissatisfied as eber. Don't t'ink too much 'bout gettin' a rifle."

"You *do* need a gun, livin' in the woods so," said Bill, sympathetically. "I'd give you mine, as true as preachin', ef I was ready to quit the woods long enough to get myself another. When I finish up this little excursion, ef you'll accept my old flint-lock, you may have her—and a good friend she's been to me, she has," and he looked affectionately at his trusty weapon.

"De Lord be praised," said the woman, casting up her great black eyes a moment; "didn't I say Providence was allays doin' somethin' for us, Sampson? Now don't you never grumble no more, husband, long as you live, wid blessin's comin' to your very door. You've obligated us expeditiously, sah," she added, with a deep courtesy to the hunter. "Sampson's been frettin' for a gun dese ten years."

"We'd better make quick work now, gettin' that b'ar out the way, 'fore it gets any darker," said Bill, rising and relighting his pine-torch. "Hearin' that little feller scratchin' outside makes me think of it. It'll give you fresh meat for some time, and the skin'll be of vally to you."

The negro also lighted a torch, and the two, armed with their knives, sallied forth in the twilight, to take possession of Bill's trophy. They had great difficulty in dragging the carcass through the narrower portions of the passage between the two caverns; but succeeded at last, and lodged it at the door of the cabin, where the skin was soon stripped from it, and the meat divided up into quarters so that it could be hung up.

"I'm goin' to scatter a little powder into that b'ar's-nest to-morrow," said Bill, when the work was over, and he had been invited to a seat near the fire; "they don't like the smell of it, and if that critter's mate should be about, it would drive him away. "Tain't exac'ly safe for you to have such neighbors settlin' down *too* close. How long you lived here, friend?—looks as ef you'd been settled a good while. Squatters, I s'pose?"

"Squatters on God's land," said the woman.

"We've been here a long time, suah enough," answered the man. "It's ten years sence I sot foot in a town, village or house 'cept my own. I didn't want to see nobody nor to have nobody see me. Dinah and I took a notion we perferred waitin' on ourselves to other folks, and we thought we'd try it."

"Got sick of the world—didn't want no company but God and natur'," again remarked the woman, in her short, impressive way.

"Thar' ain't no better company," replied Bill. "I always took to nater naterally. I've grow'd up out-a-doors. When I see these nice fellers, fixed up to fits, and afraid of an angle-worm, I pities them. Thar' ain't a hunter in Kentucky can beat Bill Mixon runnin' *arter* game—but I never run *away*. I've got long legs, and I always sorter had faith they was given me to make tall time arter painters, b'ars, and mean people. They streak it when they see me comin'. Howsomever, I don't mean to brag. I'm out on a different kind of hunt this time; and I mus' say it makes me pesky low-sperited. I'm out in s'areh of a young girl as got lost in these woods full four weeks ago; and I've about given her up."

A swift, earnest glance of intelligence passed between the two negroes. Bill, although apparently absorbed in his own feelings, observed it. Again it quickened his pulse; he was too deeply interested in the object of his expedition to overlook the slightest thing which pointed toward success; but he paused for a short time to gather up his faculties for the next step, and to allow his pulse to subside. He was not yet positive as to

the character of these people; they seemed to him a couple somewhat embittered and moody, but who would be kind to a person in real distress. If they were the confederates of a band of lawless persons, as they possibly might be, it would not be safe to trust them. Dinah's piety might be put on for effect. But no! he did not believe it. There was something in her air which made him trust and like her.

"Folks does get lost in de woods sometimes," remarked the woman.

"Use to get lost a-purpose over in ole Virginny—dat's de way we got los'," said the negro, with a chuckle.

"R'ally? was it now? yer don't tell me so! Yer had your own reasons for it, I make no doubt. S'pose they never made out to find ye, nuther?"

"Habn't found us *yet*—reckon dey quit lookin' 'fore dis."

"Ef they'd thought as much of you as I do of that girl that's missin', they wouldn't give up while there's life, that's so. I shan't never have no peace of mind, ef I can't take tidings of her back to her poor mother. She was stole away by a set of loafers, too mean to drink skim-milk. Squire Ringgold felt bad when his pair of grays was stolen put and out, but I reckon he felt wuss when they took his darter, and they was both took by the same everlastin' rattlesnake Injun; for if Dan Smith ain't chock full of Injun, I lose my guess. He's sot up to be of a good family, but his great-grandfather has all come out in him. I hate a Injun as I do a snake. I like a fa'r fight with an honest enemy, like a b'ar; but when it comes to the creepin', slithin', 'ily kind, I can't abide 'em. Howsoever, the feller who got that girl kidnappe'l has gone where he belongs, 'fore this, I hope. Her lover, poor, distracted young man, shot him down the mornin' he got eyes on him. S'pose you don't often go far away from home?"—to the negro—" 'cause I sorter allowed you might have happened to meet that young thing on your route. She took to these woods to get away from them scoundrels; and 'tain't half a mile from here I picked up this; it belongs to her;" and he drew the apron from his bosom, folding and smoothing it tenderly, as if it were the brown curls and rosy cheeks of Sallie Ringgold which he was caressing.

The negroes made no answer. Their curiosity did not seem to be at all excited by the story, and they were either not enough interested, or did not wish to reply to the hint thrown out in his last suggestion. After a pause the woman changed the subject; her eyes happened to rest on Bill's torn breeches, and the handkerchief wrapped about his limb.

"I know a yarb that's good for wounds like them," she said; "I allays keep it. It takes the fever out like a merkle. I'll set some to steepin' now, and when you go to bed you must

bind it up. You might lose your leg if you should catch cold in it now."

"I should lose my nickname ef I lost my leg," answered Bill; "come to think of it, it does pain me uncommon bad. I was so much took up with the hopes of hearin' suthin' from that young lady, that I forgot all about my scratches. Ef you got any thing that's good, I shall be obligeed."

"Dar ain't a superior doctor to Dinah in Ameriky," said her husband, as the woman went into the little anteroom before mentioned, where she was absent some time; "she's got de gift."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN PRISON.

"So they've got you caged like a catamount, have they? I tell you what it is, Will, if they get me any madder, I'll chaw up this whole concern, jailer and all. I come near to not getting in at all. If they knew it was *me*, they'd clap the bars up purty quick, and keep me in. I ain't just ready for that yet; I've got a little work on hand afore I let 'em get hold of me."

Bill Longlegs was striding backward and forward through the small room in which Will was confined, very much like some wild animal in its cage. Will, who had been in confinement nearly two weeks, and in that time seen no really friendly face but his mother's, was glad enough to greet his old friend, and anxious—intensely, breathlessly anxious—to hear if he had tidings of Sallie. Since the cruel visit of Squire Ringgold, he had no means whatever of relieving his heart and mind of the suspense which wore upon them. Whatever communication Bill had made in the half-hour since he entered the cell, it had been of a character to plunge him into a reverie so profound that he saw nor thought any thing of his visitor, until his angry exclamations and rapid strides recalled his wandering thoughts to the present.

"What do they want to get hold of you for?" asked the prisoner, in surprise.

"Oh, I'm an accomplice in all your bad doin's, you know. It was me rode off the square's hosses after you stole 'em, and passed 'em over to the next hand; it was me was so anxious to catch and punish that sweet, innocent, pious Injun, Dan Smith, so's to cover up my own doin's; and it was me helped you to waylay and shoot him. It's curious how completely they've got the whole matter settled; thar' ain't a child in the

community can't tell you jest every bad trick you and me has been up to. You hain't no idea how awful you are, Will Wood! You've done every thing under the sun that you hadn't oughter, from p'isoning your great-grandmother, who died of old age afore you was born, down to makin' fun of the humbliest girls in spellin'-school. You're a robber, counterfeiter, kidnapper, koket, koward, and kuss ginerally—to say nothin' of havin' tried to red the State of the slickest villain in it."

"Mother tells me the doctors now consider him out of danger."

"Yes—a moughty sight nearer out of it than you are. He's goin' to git well; but he's goin' to send you to the penitentiary for five or ten years—he'd as lief do that as to have you hung, and rather. His revenge will be so much the longer. And when you come out, ef you should find him comfortably settled down in the square's family, with two or three little Dans and Sallies runnin' about, he calkilates you'll feel about as he'd like to have you. As for me, he can't forgit that ride I give him by the square's gate, with his face to the hoss-tail; and he knows I'm too cute for him any day. He's *afraid* of me. He'd breathe easier and get well faster if he could hear that I was shut up in this here comfortable dwellin' with a chain around my leg and three-inch bars afore the windows. But I ain't jest *ready* to take to private life. I'm oncommon fond of having my own way—and I ginerally get it. My business, at present, is to get you out of this serape."

"I don't feel troubled about myself," replied the prisoner, lightly. "I've looked on it all the time as a farce. It don't seem to me possible that people can be so stupid as to really believe that I have done any thing wrong. It's provoking to be shut up here, when I have so much to do; but I believe the court sits in the latter part of February—and I must have patience until then."

"Ef you think people can't be 'stupid,' as you call it, and judge and jury the same way, it shows you don't know 'em," said Bill, drily. "Your experience last October ought to teach you a lesson about that. When men get excited, somebody's got to satisfy the show, guilty or *not*. I'll be skewered and roasted ef I ever come so near to blowin' up as I did when I went to the square's day before yesterday, to tell them what I knew about Sallie. As soon as mother Ringgold found out it was me, she sent the girl off after the square and the hired men to take me up—I reckon I left them parts without givin' her the information I'd taken so much trouble to bring. I got so all-fired heated up, I was afraid I'd blow to pieces ef a spark teched me. I took off my powder-horn for fear it would explode. They'll be apt to wait now till I get ready to tell 'em the news. I guess I shan't break it to 'em in the softest manner."

" Didn't you hear of what had occurred before you wen there?"

" Yes—I overtook some travelers on the Muddy Creek Bottom, and they was ful of it. They told me that Wood was nigh about lynched the night after he was took up, but the authorities kept the mob back—they said they wished he had been hung on the spot, such a desp'rit character and so young! I groaned and said it was orful—what the world was comin' to when minister's sons cut up that way 'fore they was twenty-two. They then informed me that a reward of three hundred dollars had been offered for Bill Mixon's arrest, the long legged scamp that had sot him up to his capers. I told 'em I'd a notion to try and get the reward—that I was famous for treeing coons and b'ars, and I believed I could tree Bill Mixon! and so we parted at the crossroads, very friendly. But I'd no idea the whole community was so sot—and ef she'd took her husband's gun and shot me in the breast, mother Ringgold could not have hurt my feelin's the way she did. Wal, dod blast 'em all, ef they want to b'lieve we've made way with Sallie, and that Dan Smith is a pious man, let 'em make all they can out of it. Ef it wasn't for you and her, I'd leave these parts in disgust, and settle down where there wasn't a white man within a hundred miles. As it is, I'm jest goin' to stay by, and hold on to this end of the rope till they run it out as far as it'll go—then I'll jerk it sudden, and upset judge, jury and all. It'll be fun alive, to see 'em sqrawl. What lawyer have you got?"

" Lawyer?—oh, none, yet. It will be time enough by-and-by."

" No it won't. And you mus'n't have any common trash. I'm gwine to get Jo Daviess to tend to your case."

" Oh, he is too busy to be bothered with a small affair like this. I couldn't afford to pay him, and I don't like to ask so many favors of him."

" Can't help it—he's your man. I shall put a flea in his ear about the cause of this rumpus. Thar'll be plenty of false witnesses, who'll swear to any thing under the sun to make the case go ag'in you. They want jest such a feller as Daviess to spile the pie they're a-cookin'. I'm bound for Frankfort as soon as I leave this room; I shan't go by the common route neither. Jest you keep up your sperits, my boy, and you'll hear from me ag'in. Ef I can't come here, which may be a leetle too resky, I can find means to send all the word I want to by your mother. Mr. Daviess will come to see you, the day the Legislature adjourns, so's to give him a chance. And mind you don't tell him all I told you—he'll make a good case without all the facts. I shall try to let you hear from me as often as oncet a week. There comes that pesky jailer now. He isn't awar' of the name

and callin' of your visitor, or he'd invite me to stay longer, and take rooms next to yours. I had to tie a knot in my legs to pass muster. Say, my son, don't you think I make a very respectable old uncle, now, for an extra occasion?"

Will could not help laughing at the face which his friend put on, as he asked this question. Taken in connection with the tow hair which he had improvised, it was that of a benevolent old man of sixty; and the voice suited the countenance. It was one of Bill's most useful peculiarities, that he could change his features to suit the situation; this, with a kind of magnetism which he possessed in an unusual degree, taken with unfailing coolness and strength, enabled him to do many things which seemed marvelous. The gifts which he had hitherto used for amusement, now served him an excellent purpose in the time of need.

"Good-by, nephew," he said, in a voice tremulous with the weight of years, as the jailer unlocked the door and signified to him that his hour was up. "It's bin a turrible stroke to me to travel all the way from Cincinnati to see your mother and you, and find you in this situation. The best I can do is to hope you ain't guilty. Manslaughter's a dreeful thing—dreeful! I never thought to have my own nephew accused of it. Sister takes it to heart terribly. Wal! wal! wal!—heugh! the best I can do is to hope you ain't guilty. Much obligeed to you, jailer, for your civility in lettin' me in to talk with him. I came a good ways, and I didn't hear the news till I got most here. Much obligeed to you, sir, much obligeed. Wal, wal, the best I can do is to hope he ain't guilty—heugh!" And with a half-snort, half-sigh, the old man hobbled out, bent over his staff in a manner which had the effect of "tying a knot in his legs." "Does folks generally think the young man's done what's charged to him?" he inquired, stopping in the passage, puffing over his cane, and turning an inquiring look over the top of his horn-bowed spectacles to the officer.

"Oh, he *did* it—that's no doubt about that! The only question is whether the law will decide that he had sufficient provocation. Most of us believes he's rather a hard case. If it should be proved that he made away with Squire Ringgold's daughter, he won't have no mercy shown him. People's very much excited about it."

"Made away with a young woman! lord-a-mussy! has he done that, too? We used to think he was such a likely lad. Ah, William! William! heugh!"

"Public sentiment's very strong against him," remarked the gossiping jailer.

"We thought he was such a likely lad."

"I've understood he did bear an uncommon good name in

B — settlement. It's likely it's bad company has done it. When boys get a-going with wild society, it's pretty sure to spile 'em."

"Sure as hot weather is to spile a fresh egg," groaned the visitor. "If I knew who'd been leadin' that boy astray, I'd like to give 'em a taste of my cane, if I am sixty odd."

"Wal, if ever you meet a lank, long-legged, yellow-haired person as calls himself Bill Mixon, up in Cincinnati, you may thrash him to your heart's content—they say he's been the principal one that ruined that boy. There's a reward out for him now of three hundred dollars."

"A lank, long-legged, yellow-har'd person as calls himself Bill Mixon?" repeated Bill, in his own natural strong nasal tones, drawing himself up to his full hight and getting rid of his wrinkles and spectacles at the same moment. "Don't you wish you could catch him, and get that three hundred?" and before the jailer had recovered his astonishment, he had mounted the horse which he had tied at the door, and with a little whoop of triumph rode off in the face of the enemy.

The man, thinking "discretion the better part of valor," and that, since he had been deceived into allowing a long meeting between the prisoner and his confederate, he had better keep the fact to himself, stood quietly in the door, looking after him, until he disappeared up the street. He then returned to Will's cell and instituted a thorough search for any instruments for effecting an escape which might have been conveyed to him; but as Will had no idea of fleeing from a trial which he was desirous should take place, there was nothing to repay the search.

"Mighty cute old gentleman that uncle of yours," was the cynical remark of the jailer as he carried on his investigations. "To pay you for that trick I'll be extra careful to prevent your seeing any more of your affectionate relatives."

"Just as you please," replied Will, coolly; "as I hope to quit your lodgings in a few weeks, I can afford to put up with temporary inconveniences."

"You'll quit these for worse, I reckon."

"The law will probably decide that matter—not my jailer."

"That's not so certain, nuther. I can tell you, youngster, you'd better be sayin' your prayers. For there's men have made up their minds if the law don't do justice, they'll take it in their own hands. You'd better pass away your time a-repenting and writing out your confession for the warning of others." And with this little stab at the peace of mind of his prisoner, the disturbed official left, locking the door after him with particular vigor.

It was enough to make any man wrathy to be fooled as he had been; he did not recover his temper for several days.

In the mean time Bill Longlegs rode over to Frankfort and had an interview with Jo Daviess. Mr. Daviess was annoyed with the whole affair, having plenty of business of his own on hand, and this being at present quite out of his line, but he was too much attached to his young friend and whilom scholar to leave him in danger of falling the victim of a base conspiracy. Besides, in freeing him and convicting others, he would be doing a substantial service to the State; as he perceived what influence was undermining the young man, and what stakes the really guilty parties had in jeopardy. At the close of the interview Bill had his promise that he would go to Lexington and take up the case of his young client as soon as the pressure of business was over at Frankfort, which would be a few days before the trial.

For some time after doing this service for his friend, Bill took himself to parts unknown. Poor Will languished in close confinement, the obstinate jailer even refusing to allow his mother to see him for weeks after the visit of the old uncle from Cincinnati. Those weeks were terribly long to the prisoner, whose fair face grew still whiter and more girlish, and yet older too, with an expression of suffering and deep thought. At that interview with Bill, the hunter had told him that he was convinced that Sallie Ringgold was still alive, or had been recently, though very ill; and that he was out after more definite information. This had been just sufficient to arouse the keenest hope to alternate with the deadliest despair in the lover's heart; he thought far more about Sallie's fate than his own; and as the dreadful days dragged along, one after the other, and he received none of the promised messages from Bill, which he was certain the hunter was sharp enough to find conveyance for, if he wished, his health and spirits suffered accordingly.

CHAPTER IX.

A REVELATION.

To go back to the evening in which Bill first found himself in the cabin of the negro runaways, after his adventure with the bear; he was not long in making up his mind that the inmates knew something of the lost girl. His object was to win their confidence, so that if they had any knowledge of her fate, they would impart it to him. During the absence of the woman in the little addition spoken of, ostensibly for the purpose of procuring the herbs to steep for a lotion to be applied to

his wounded leg, his ear, rendered preternaturally acute by his habits as a hunter, detected a faint whispering. There was then another person belonging to this secluded establishment. While he was listening to the praises of Dinah's doctoring with one ear, the other was endeavoring to find out the secret of the little room; but he was not prepared for the surprise in store for him. He sat with his back to the door of this room, when he was suddenly startled into a speechless astonishment by a light figure standing by his side, and the next instant Sallie Ringgold had thrown herself into his lap and was hugging his neck, kissing his brown cheek, and crying like a baby.

It would not be derogatory to Bill's character as the most courageous hunter of the Kentucky woods, to say that he cried a little "for company." He had no previous idea that Sallie thought so much of him as she appeared to at this instant; and indeed, her soft caresses were his reward for all the time and energy he had expended in her behalf. In the happy security of her own home, she had thought of him only as a queer, brave, homely fellow, who sometimes made her a present of the wild turkeys he had shot—but now, an angel from the blue lights of heaven could not have worn so lovable a guise to the poor, sick, pining girl, as the awkward hunter who had proved himself so true a friend, and who had come from *home*!

"Now don' yer fret yerself so, honey, or you'll be done-down ag'in, sure," said the negress, after Sallie had wept some moments on Bill's shoulder, without a word having passed between them, he holding her close as he would a frightened child.

"Has she been sick?" he asked, holding her away on his knee, and searching the face which gave of itself sufficient answer to his question.

It was not the gay and blooming Sallie of the past whom he beheld; the roses were fled from the cheeks, the dimples had vanished, the roundness; the eyes were large, with dark lines beneath them; and only a covering of short hair, dark, and curling in little rings which were childishly pretty, now adorned the head of his darling.

"She's been down in the shadow of the valley of *de*," said the black woman, in her peculiar, earnest style. "I's been leadin' her back, a step to a time, as you larns a baby to walk—but she ain't safe out yet, so's you best be kerful of agitation."

"I shall get strong now, right away," whispered Sallie, pressing Bill's great horny hand in her own, which were like two tily leaves, so pale and thin; but her voice was so weak as she said it, and she felt so light, as she sat on his knee, that the hunter felt the trouble coming back to his heart again as he looked at her.

"It's the firs' time she's been off her bed for a monf," said the

negress, "but when she heard it was you, she would get right up. You'd better let me carry yer back, now, honey, 'fore you gets faint wid settin up."

"Oh no, let me stay here a little while, aunty. I won't sit up—I'll lie down;" and with an expression of perfect peace and content, Sallie nestled in Bill's arm, her cheek on his shoulder, her eyes closed—she had not yet asked one question about father, mother or lover—it seemed enough for her to see a face from home again—to know that she was sought for and found. And whatever questions crowded into her thought, she was really too weak to talk much; the slight flush kindled in her cheeks by the excitement, Dinah feared was a symptom of returning fever, and made her drink a concoction which she had prepared, before she would allow her to compose herself on Bill's rugged breast. It is doubtful if the odd, unmated hunter was ever before so happy as he was during that hour—or ever again would be. For the time being this helpless young girl was *his*—his daughter, or his sweetheart, he cared not which—somebody who clung to him an' whom he sheltered. This little bit of sweetness in the midst of his rough life was like a ripe berry gathered from briers.

While the heroine rested in peace, Sampson gave an account of the circumstances which had brought her to their cabin, and kept her there so long.

"It was berry cole wedder—fus' time dey'd seen snow for four year; hadn't had wery good luck trappin' game lately; hadn't had no fresh meat for some time. Dinah was tired of smoked venison and hoe-cake; so I 'tought I'd try and tree a 'possum—Dinah could make 'possum-stew better'n mos' people. I started out one mornin' to try fur a 'possum. I had no dog and no gun; but I'd treed and killed many a one myself. I didn't commonly go around de hill out into de woods through which de roads ran. Didn't ear' to meet white folks; so kep' out de woods on dat side; nobody never come into dis part de wilderness hardly. But I got on de tracks of a 'possum in de snow; I could foller 'em as easy as broad daylight, an' dey took me over de hill and along, till I was furder away from de cabin dan I often went. I was boun' to have dat critter, an' I didn't want to give up. Wal, after a while I seen *oder* tracks, and dem was so cur'us I foller'd 'em an' let de beas' go—dey was human tracks, only so berry light and small, I knew dey couldn't be Injun's nor hunter's—dey was eider a woman's wid berry little foot, or dey was child'n. I couldn't guess what dey could be doin', deep in de woods, alone—kase dar' wasn't any man along as I could see by dar' bein only one track; dat went wanderin' all about, lonesome-like; an' purty soon I found a shoe. 'Twas a little merocker shoe dat jest fitted de tracks. I made up my

mind 'twas some chile had got strayed away, and was tryin' to find de road, which I knew was full fifteen mile away, when I seen somethin' lying on de groun' at de foot of a big tree, which looked like a human bein' dropped down dar' asleep.

"Dar' was whar' I found dis young lady. W'en I went up to her and axed her if she was lost, she didn't speak; she felt so berry cole I was done sure she was friz to def. I went to pick her up, and she opened her eyes, and when she saw me, she was so scart she went right off more onsensible dan before—an' I don't wonder, for I knows I ain't good-lookin' to a timid little white critter lost alone in de woods. I had a little hum-made whisky wid me, an' I poured some down her mouth; but I thought de bes' thing would be to get her to Dinah's warm fire as quick as I could; so I frew her over my shoulder and made for home.

"My wife was surprised to get pickaninny 'stead o' possum; but she sot herself to work as she knows how, to do de bes' she could. Dat chile was moughty near a goner. She was starved, and friz, and tired out. Her feet was friz bad; but Dinah, she knows a yarb is good for 'em, and she tied 'em up in dat yarb, and I don't think her feet will be temperately de wuss on account of de frost. Well, she made her purty comfortable, but dat night she was took sick. De damage of de wedder, de worry and ail, brought on high fever. She was out of her head—berry bad. Ef I says it who shouldn't, I don't think no doctor in Kentucky could a-done bettah for her dan my wife did. For fever yarbs she's powerful. Dar's doctors would give a tousan' dollars to know some secrets she does 'bout roots and yarbs. For four, five days and nights she tended her patience all de time, as if she was our own; and den I spelleed her settin' up nights. Five, ten days 'fore she got dat fever broke; it run so uncommon high. Dinah says 'twas de toughest fever ever she got hold of; but she cl'ared it out at last. She cut all de purty curls off, de young lady's head was so hot.

"I never see Dinah take to nobody as she did to dat chile, sence we lost our own;" here the narrator paused a moment, while the woman choked down an audible sob. "We was sertain she'd been took away from home without leave or license, from what she told us 'fore she was took down so bad; and de way she prayed to 'em to carry her back, when she was raving wid de fever, callin' her mudder and fadder, enough to break her heart.

"When she come back to her right mind she was as weak as a new-born baby. I expeck she felt drefful in dis new cabin, with us colored folks, and no frien's. Dinah, she tried all she could to make her comfortable, and not afraid of us. As soon as we dar'st let her talk, she asked us, if anybody found out de

cabin and inquired for her, not to let on she was here till she told us wedder it was any her frien's or not. She was so on-easy for fear dem same men would catch her ag'in, I thinks it's sot her back 'bout gettin' well. Howsomever, she's gettin' her strength as fast as could be expected. She's been frettin' too, all de time, for 'er fadder to come after her. I tol' her neider frien's nor enemies would eber find her here; but jes' as soon as she could b'ar de journey, I would take her safe home myself, on my own back, ef we couldn't come across a wagon, and catch a ride; and dat's a great deal for Sampson to promise, who's bound never to 'sociate wid white folks no more."

"They have been so kind," whispered Sallie; "I love them. I want to go home, but I wish them to go with me. Oh, Bill, it was so good of you to search me out. Do you know, it seems as if it were some other world—years and years since I was rudely torn away from home. I had almost persuaded myself that all my past life was a dream—only the last month a reality—for they tell me I have been here but a month. Seeing you, hearing your voice, brings it all back. My poor mother; she feels terribly, doesn't she, Bill?"

"She's been very sick in bed, frettin' about you; but she'll be a woman when she hears thar's nuthin' wuss happened to you than a spell o' fever. Thar'll be a day of thanksgivin' held in the settlement, I'll be bound. Thar's somebody else will be nation glad to hear you're safe and sound, and not eat up by b'ars."

"Where is he?"

"He come on to jine in the s'arch; and when we found out enough to put us on this track, he went back to let your mother know. I've been lookin' for him back more'n a week."

"How good everybody is," sighed Sallie.

"Ceptin' those rascals who carried you off, and that sneakin' catamount as sot 'em up to it," responded Bill, with a laugh. "Gracious, Mrs. Dinah, she's gettin' as white as a sperit! I reckon she's been too much excited."

"She'll have the fever back to-morrow," said Dinah; and so it proved.

A considerable return of fever, which, though not alarming, prevented the idea of attempting to remove her home for some days, caused Bill the next day to conclude to go back to B—without her, get her father and mother, and the family carriage—which could not make its way through the woods, perhaps, but might be brought as near as possible. Sallie felt very desponding at the proposition to leave her, even for the two days necessary; but there was nothing else to be done, and she was ashamed to express all the melancholy which she felt.

It was upon this important errand that Bill Longlegs, in the

fullness of his generous heart, had gone to Mrs. Ringgold, who, instead of listening to his story, had dispatched her maid-servant after a man to arrest him. His warm feelings were fatally chilled. Angry and disgusted, he strode away, without attempting to convince her of his innocence. Of course he could have proved it by directing her friends to Miss Ringgold, whose testimony would clear him, and put another light upon Will Wood's violence toward Daniel Smith; but this he was now too offended and obstinate to do. He felt himself injured; and he was not so perfect but that he resolved upon a plan of revenge. The only obstacle to this plan was that it would keep the girl from her friends for some weeks yet; but he felt as if they did not deserve to have their anxiety removed; and as for her, if he could persuade her that it was all for the best for Will and himself, he knew that she would wait with the patience and cheerfulness of a true woman.

He had, therefore, gone back and had a long interview with Sallie, who was, as yet, only able to sit up an hour or two in the course of the day. It was after this that he obtained communication with Will; and even to him he did not divulge the whole truth about his betrothed's safety and place of abiding; neither did he tell all to lawyer Daviess, during the interview in which he engaged his services for Will.

"I've trapped plenty of wild animals in my day, little and big, and I'm a-gwine to trap that painter now. He'll get them sly paws of his'n in, and he'll never get 'em out without pullin' the claws off. He's furce and wily, Dan Smith is, but he ain't no match for a reg'lar hunter, when his dander's up. He'll walk right into the trap without seein' it," Bill had muttered to himself, as he laid his plans for future action.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIAL.

THE day of the trial arrived. Although it was no longer a trial for murder, but only for an attempt to kill, there was unusual excitement in the town of Lexington and throughout the whole county, hundreds of people flocking in to be present during the progress of the affair. For this there were three or four reasons: first, the powerful interest attaching to the disappearance of Sallie Ringgold; second, the secret influence of the confederate band of thieves and robbers; third, the character of the parties implicated; fourth, the fact that Joseph

Hamilton Daviess was employed in the defense of the accused.

Daniel Smith had so far recovered from his wounds as to be able to ride out in a carriage, which he had done for several days previous to the sitting of the court. Now that all danger of his life was over, he was in no hurry to get *too* well; he desired to keep the sympathies of the public enlisted as deeply as possible, until after the conviction of his enemy. The fact is, he was as well able to manage a horse or do business as before his injury; but he would not allow his complete convalescence to appear; when he did ride out in a carriage, it was with plenty of cushions, and much appearance of suffering, and much more for the benefit of his case than for the fresh air.

Secretly, he was in exultant spirits. Things were working to a charm. His plot, which had been at first a very simple one, embracing only his revenge upon William Wood, and the chance of afterward gaining the hand of Sallie Ringgold, had become more complicated as circumstances rendered step after step necessary, to save himself from ruin and exposure. His companions in crime, whom he had chosen to kidnap the girl, and whom he continued to employ for his purposes, were keen, vigilant fellows, well versed in the wild life of a new country. After his wound, under the inducement of prospective reward, and to clear themselves from suspicion, they renewed their search after Miss Ringgold with so much perseverance that they finally detected her place of concealment. With a cunning equal to the ranger's own, they had discovered Bill Mixon in one of his visits to the negro cabin, had traced him there, hung about in the woods during his stay, and afterward reconnoitered the place until they satisfied themselves of Sallie's residence there. They then reported to head-quarters. Their orders were to remain constantly on the look-out, and at the first favorable moment to again kidnap the young lady, convey her to a place designated and confine her there a close prisoner; to intimate to her that their first story was false of their acting under the direction of Daniel Smith; that they were employed by Bill Mixon, and had been from the first, who wished to keep her from giving testimony until the termination of the trial; that William Wood purposed to attempt an escape from prison; that if he succeeded he was to come for her, induce her to marry him immediately, when he and his wife, with Bill Mixon, would leave for some region of country where they would be safe from the consequences of past acts. Dan hoped, by this story, supported with as much seeming proof as could be manufactured, to convince her that Mixon had really been deceiving her, and that Wood was a criminal whom she would not wish to marry—then when the trial was over, his emissaries

should contrive to have him (Dan) appear as a warrior, when he would trust to her gratitude and his own powers of fascination to soften her feelings toward him. The first part of this programme had been successfully performed—Sallie having been abducted from Sampson's cabin one dark and stormy night by three villains, who had discovered her place of concealment, and she was a second time a captive in the wilderness.

If Daniel Smith was in high spirits, Will Wood was in corresponding low spirits. Since the visit of his hunter friend, he had received no tidings whatever from him; and his suspense with regard to the girl he loved was far more absorbing and saddening than his own personal danger. As the first of March drew near, the day set for his case to be tried, this anxiety rose to fever; but night after night came, day after day arose and passed, without the slightest message being conveyed to him. It was not until the night before the trial that Jo Daviess had a personal interview with his client. He was surprised to hear from him that there was no report of Bill Longlegs. Will was equally disappointed to learn that the lawyer had not heard from him since his first visit, when he had given him the main features of the case, promising him some important information soon with regard to matters pertaining to the affair. Up to the last moment both of them hoped he would make his appearance; but the morning came, the hour, and Will went into court without a friend, except his advocate. There was some difficulty in impanneling a jury, as nearly every man in the county had made up and expressed his opinion that William Wood was guilty of an unjustifiable attempt at manslaughter. This was the offense for which he was indicted, but it stood as one only of the long array of crimes of which rumor accused him.

The witnesses for the State were numerous and overwhelming. Evidence was not only given on the point in question, but the side issues were dragged in, in the attempt to prove the badness of his character. Will listened with amazement to statements of events in his past career, which were here sworn to, of which himself was most strangely ignorant. Of course his lawyer was prompt to challenge much of this as inadmissible; but so great was the tide of sentiment against him that the law itself could hardly be brought to exercise equity. The three men who had encountered William Wood and Bill Mixon at the tavern, the day of the attempted murder, swore to a most astounding story, and all the sharp cross-questioning of the defense could not make them convict themselves of falsehood. They testified that on the day in question, Bill Mixon had been playing cards at the tavern, and getting excited by the loss of money, had drunk more than usual, and was soon so

intoxicated as not to talk with his customary prudence. That he had then and there begun to boast of his exploit in carrying off Miss Sallie Ringgold, and turning suspicion in other channels; that he had said that he had kidnapped her, and that she was then forcibly detained at a house not fifty miles from there, and that he and Wood were then on their way to that house, when Wood intended to compel the young lady to marry him. That Wood, hearing a portion but not all of this indiscreet exposure, had expostulated with his companion, and gotten him away as soon as possible from the tavern, pretending that they were on their way to Lexington. That the two men were in disguise. That they did not recognize them till Bill Mixon betrayed himself. That they presently mounted their horses and pursued the two, thinking that it might be proper to arrest them. That just after they overtook them, while they were hesitating about the surest way of securing them, knowing them to be armed, Daniel Smith and Jared Ellis met the party, coming along the road from the direction of Lexington. That Smith knew them, the witnessess, but did not recognize the others. That he stopped to exchange friendly greetings, when William Wood covertly drew a pistol and fired upon Smith, without giving him the slightest chance to defend himself. That the two men then immediately put spurs to their horses, which were very fast animals, and rode off as swiftly as possible. That they pursued them a short distance, but gave up the attempt to arrest them, and returned to the wounded man, who was apparently dead, but who afterward revived, so that they brought him into Lexington that night.

Jared Ellis, the person who accompanied Smith at the time he was assaulted, corroborated these statements as far as his evidence went.

Daniel Smith was then called, and took his place on the witness stand. His appearance in court elicited a universal murmur of sympathy. Always dark and thin, his recent confinement to the house had given him a sallow paleness which made him, as the ladies said, "so interesting;" he leaned heavily upon the arm of a friend, with an air of resigned suffering. Only his eyes, when he raised them an instant to those of the prisoner, revealed a glimpse of his internal state to which his smooth countenance gave the lie—they glittered with a reddish blackness—the intense light of hate and triumph. His testimony was to the same effect of the affidavit he had made when supposed to be dying. He dwelt with great emphasis upon the notice of the prisoner for making the attack; but was sharply brought up, when he strayed from the evidence in point, by the opposing counsel.

Upon the part of the defense a few witnesses were called to

prove the good character of the prisoner, his presence in Frankfort, quietly pursuing the study of the law, at the time of the abduction of Miss Ringgold, whose mother was summoned and obliged to testify that Sallie had told her that an engagement existed between herself and William Wood.

This proof was all of the negative kind, which on the other side was of the most positive character. Mr. Daviess' defense lay chiefly in discrediting the character of the plaintiff and his witnesses; but his late arrival at Lexington had given him no time to mass evidence against them. This part of the labor had been left to Bill Mixon, who had assured him that he should be "on hand," with abundant matter. His utter failure to appear was bad in two ways: first, it left the preparatory work all undone; secondly, it looked as if the consciousness of guilt kept him away.

Engaged in an unpopular cause, and without prospect of a fee, there was no reason why the great lawyer should exert himself in this case. But during the few weeks in which young Wood had been a student of his he had formed a brotherly affection for the pure-minded and amiable youth, and he knew that, whether he succeeded in exposing the villainy or not, he was suffering from a concerted plot, made up by as detestable a band of scoundrels as there was in the State; his love of justice, no less than his love of his client, impelled him to do all in his power for his salvation. He now regretted he had not sooner abandoned his own affairs, and given a few days to tracing up this conspiracy. The prosecuting attorney, knowing that Daviess was counsel for the defense, had secured on his side one of the ablest lawyers of the State—a brilliant, unscrupulous man, who cared more for the glory of victory and the substantial stimulus of an extraordinary fee than he did for the purity of the case he might undertake.

This man had now plenty of material for a good argument. He had the weight of testimony and the unbounded sympathy of his audience, judge, jury and people. Nearly the whole of the first day had been expended in impanneling a jury, and it was afternoon of the second before the counsel for the plaintiff began his plea. His speech was one of the kind in fashion then amidst the talented but somewhat reckless members of the western bar—the keenness of whose intellects seemed sharpened by the attrition of rough, new-country experiences. It abounded in satire and invective. No smallest point, unfavorable to the defendant, escaped his vigilant notice. He dwelt upon the *motive* of the prisoner for committing the attempted murder. *Jealousy!* What passion, of all the wild passions of the human heart, was so powerful as this, so blind, so ferocious?—its unresting hostility to its object only quieted by the annihilation

of that object. Good men, of fair intentions, under the spur of this passion, had committed deeds which they afterward repented in dust and ashes. How many eyes had wept over the bloody tragedy of Othello! Yet the Moor of Venice, wrought up to the furthest tension of despairing fury, paused in the moment of his revenge, to give the victim a moment's grace:

“If you bethink yourself of any crime,
Unreconciled as yet to Heaven and grace,
Solicit for it straight :
I will walk by ;
I will not kill thy unprepared spirit ;
No, Heaven forefend !—I will not kill thy soul.”

“The prisoner at the bar had not taken a lesson of the noble Moor. He was capable of the malignity but not of the magnanimity. *He* had given his victim no warning of the deadly deed intended. He was a *coward*. He had not even the bravado of a duellist. He was an *assassin*. His craven spirit sought the safest method of getting rid of a rival. The shot of a pistol, covertly drawn and fired at an unsuspecting person in the midst of a friendly greeting—*this* was the *chivalrous*, the *daring* and *gallant* manner in which this son of Kentucky attempted to rid himself of a dangerous rival, whose superior qualities, he had reason to fear, would prove too much for him in the contest for the heart of an innocent and lovely girl.”

The audience to which he appealed was very much excited by this view of the deed—*cowardice* was, for them, more of a crime than murder. The cries of the sheriff for “order” could hardly suppress the hoots and groans in which the swaying mass of humanity, packed within and around the court-room, indulged.

He then drew an affecting picture of the kidnapped young lady, whose fate was still involved in the deepest mystery, the hearts of whose parents were wrung with irremediable anguish—the innocent victim of this poverty-stricken young man’s ambition to force himself into society and position for which he was unfitted. Should such acts go unchecked by the severest penalty of the law, our daughters would no longer be safe even in the shelter of their very homes. The audacity, the baseness of this deed transcended the crime of murder for which, indeed, they were now trying the prisoner, but which was only one in the long catalogue of his transgressions. Efforts had been made to find and arrest his accomplice in guilt, but that person had fled the country, apparently to escape his share of merited punishment. The defense had now the unparalleled effrontery to pretend that they should be glad to see that person in court.

When he had finished, it was the general impression that there was very little use in the defendant’s lawyer making an

argument, if he *was* Joseph Hamilton Daviess. The guilt of the prisoner was so conclusive, that he, himself, sitting there listening to the speech, and to the muttered execrations of those about him, began to lose himself in a dreamlike doubt of his own innocence.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when Jo Daviess began to speak. On this occasion he happened to be attired in a new suit of fine broadcloth—there being no trace of his frequent oddities of apparel about him—and looked magnificently as he came to his feet. So fully were the minds of the audience made up, and so incensed were they against the prisoner, that they hardly cared to listen to any thing on the other side—nothing but the reputation of the speaker could have restrained their impatience, but that was sufficient of itself to insure attention.

The first thing he did was to pick the evidence to pieces. He went back to the position of both parties just previous to the assault—one of them a quiet student of the law, noticed for the purity of his character and the unblemished reputation which he had inherited from his father—a man, not wealthy in lands and stock, but rich in all that ennobles life; the other at that very time, an outlaw, escaped from prison, obliged to hide himself from re-arrest; a fugitive whom he, himself, had once convicted of the lowest and meanest of crimes—a horse-thief, a desperate ruffian, who, in order to again appear in society from which his deeds had excluded him, was trying to fasten his cloak upon the shoulders of another. He went over the scene in the log school-house, in which he had once before rescued his innocent client from the false accusations of his accuser, and of the arrest and confessions of that accuser when himself brought to justice. He showed how absurd and unreasonable it was to place any confidence in the statements of men bound together for the worst purposes—how palpably ridiculous the construction which had been put upon the abduction of the young lady.

"In my practice of the law," said Jo Daviess—we give his words, but not the eloquence of voice and eye which informed them—"I have studied human nature in all its varying phases; and, amidst many other novel and interesting things, I have discovered one fact to be relied on—persecution is far more apt to pursue the innocent than the guilty. Public sentiment is as shifting and unreliable as the dancing of light upon the dancing water; the voice of a mob is that of passion, not of judgment. I would as soon trust a babe to the care of a hungry hyena, as a good man's life to the hands of a mob which had come together for the purpose of finding something in him to pounce upon. The fact that public sentiment runs so strongly against

my client would be a great inducement to me, if I had no other, to believe in his innocence. It is a melancholy truth, and one not conducive to an ambition to lead a stainless life, that those of most unblemished character, let an enemy, *lo* matter how vile, but dare point the finger of accusation against them, are the first to be suspected. Let the wicked or the envious assail, and *lo!* every man is eager to prove his own superiority, by throwing a stone at this new object of attack. It seems as if each one said to himself, 'Let us blacken this white character, and my own will appear so much the fairer!' An idiot would be ashamed of the credulity which the community had shown in the instance now before them. It was as if some Yankee showman was purposely laughing in their faces, after he had got their mouths open in wonder and belief of some impossible monster he had to show them. A thimbleful of intellect, a single grain of common sense, was all that was needed to enable the jury, who had this matter in hand, to comprehend which of the two, the accused or the accuser, had the most interest in the abduction of Sallie Ringgold. Is it credible that a young man, to whom she has plighted her vows, and to whom she is honorably engaged, and who has gone earnestly to work to fit himself, by the study of the law, for the position which her father thinks he should occupy—is it credible that he has hired an emissary to carry away by force, against her will, the girl who loves him, and whom he tenderly loves—who would marry him the hour he was ready, without any such absurd or dangerous proceeding? Would he wring the heart of that girl's mother with doubt and anguish, exciting hatred and suspicion of himself, when, with a little patient delay, he could have her willing consent to his becoming her son? A plea more untenable has never been brought before any court. A shameless conspiracy in attempting to hoodwink the law—to force the forms of justice herself to aid it in its reckless purposes. Does the jury wish to become a party to this bold proceeding? If not, let it divest itself of prejudice, and look at the facts of the case. If the accused had no object to induce him to kidnap the young lady to whom he was betrothed, had the accuser a motive? Fallen as his fortunes were, he hoped by this *coup de main* to raise them again. If he failed, he could sink no lower—if he succeeded, he might again impose himself upon the community. It was a rash as well as heartless adventure. It succeeded, so far as the disappearance of the young lady, and her successful concealment—God grant that it have no further and more fatal success! He had been present when the bereaved parents of the lost girl, traveling to Frankfort, to find if perchance their daughter had gone to the man to whom they knew her to be engaged, had

communicated the fact of her disappearance to the prisoner. He had witnessed the unmistakable surprise and agony which the tidings inflicted upon him ; he had consulted with him upon the steps most advisable to take to bring the unhappy affair to light ; William Wood had then expressed his belief that Daniel Smith had been the person, if indeed she had been kidnapped, who had carried off Miss Ringgold. With all the ardor of the love he bore the beautiful girl, the prisoner had, from that evening forward, to the day of his arrest, given heart and soul to the search for tidings of her. Aided by Bill Mixon, who had some particular information of the organized band of villains who infest this county, and of which Daniel Smith and his witnesses are members, he was so successful as to come upon the men who were used by Smith to convey away the girl, and to compel them, at the point of the pistol, to confess what had been done with her ; just at this moment, when his heart was on fire with anger at the cold-blooded villain who had caused so much misery, that villain rode up to the party, his face, as usual, shining with sleek hypocrisy. It was more than the flesh and blood of a SON OF KENTUCKY—not a coward and a craven—it was more than the chivalry of a son of Kentucky could endure. Impetuously he fired the shot which should forever have stilled the false heart of the man who had twice injured him ! It was the noblest act of his life ! Would you, fathers of fair daughters, have had him do less ? Would you, brothers of our beautiful and helpless women ? No, not one of you ! Had he killed him on the spot, it would have been the most justifiable homicide that ever was committed. Any jury in the land would refuse to sit a moment upon so palpable a verdict. ' Not guilty ' would be the verdict by acclamation.

" When my learned friend talks of the chivalry of our glorious young State, pray God he select some more worthy illustration of it than that base and cringing hound who shrinks now from the blaze of my indignation. He is interesting, I may say eloquent, when he talks of *jealousy*, quoting the immortal bard of Avon with that flowing grace for which he is peculiar. Jealousy is, indeed, a master-passion—linked with *revenge*, it will dare much to discomfit its object. My friend has made this motive so palpable to you that I need not dwell upon it as the leading incentive to the acts of Daniel Smith. He was *rejected* by Miss Ringgold, and his rival accepted ; he was cheated of the revenge he then plotted, and disgraced before the girl in whose eyes he wished to appear well. It was natural to a mind like his to resolve more desperately than ever upon *revenge*. Add to this the ambition to attach himself to a rich and leading family, and you have all the motive you can possibly desire—*jealousy, revenge, ambition*. You do not doubt wh

guilty party. In the mean time, who is the saddest sufferer by his crimes?—the young lady herself, who is either pining in some hidden den, or—what would perhaps be better—is at this moment an inmate of the skies, driven too early from love and the delights of life, to represent her wrongs before the court of heaven. Should her pure eyes be looking down upon this scene, reading our inmost hearts and motives, could her voice speak, her finger point to the criminal, which, think you, would be blasted by her evidence? My client weeps. His heart is sick and sore with the anguish he has been made to suffer, confined in a cell, when his soul ached to be abroad, searching for some token of her whom he loves better than his own life. Call not his tears unmanly. He cares not for his own fate—he scorns the worst this court can inflict upon him—he is calm in the strength of integrity; but when I speak of her—that helpless maiden whom he idolized—his long suspense and grief breaks up the fountain of his tears. When Daniel Smith sheds a tear, it will be time for crocodiles to weep. I not only call upon this court to find my client innocent, but to instantly indict the man who is already a convicted robber and counterfeiter, amenable to the law for crimes already proven. I had hoped to support all my assertions by an overwhelming mass of testimony which should bring confusion upon the opposition, but the person upon whom I relied remains mysteriously absent. I do not doubt that he has fallen a victim to this same plot. Death alone, I believe, could have restrained his ready feet and courageous utterance. He was indefatigable in his efforts to unravel the mystery surrounding the fate of Sallie Ringgold; and, I doubt not, has been tracked and silenced by the partners in the dark plot of which I warn the jury. In the absence of this important witness, and the evidence which he was to bring, I can not, still, for an instant, doubt that justice will be done to my client. We ask no favors; we appeal to no blind passions. Our cause is right, and will prevail. My client assaulted Daniel Smith, with intent to kill—now let the law take hold of the forger, robber, perjurer, and murderer, and finish what my client failed to accomplish. Hark! what is that? It is the voice of Sallie Ringgold! It hovers mysteriously about me on the air, imploring me not to permit a blighting wrong to be heaped upon the early manhood of the youth she loved. Her mother and father, she says, have deserted him; his friends condemn him—only God and the law are still his friends. All I ask of the jury is, to remember, when they are making up their verdict, that every witness upon the plaintiff's side this day is a man whose oath is utterly worthless. Do not let perjury be more powerful than the natural evidence of proven facts."

We have given but the briefest and dullest report of an

argument which, aided by the splendid fascination of the orator's personal powers, had the effect to turn the channel of popular sentiment short off, in a new direction. The concluding speech of the counsel for the State was not successful in again diverting it, though it was replete with personalities, seeking to impair the force of his opponent's plea by insinuations that it was he, in a previous case, who had been the defender of the prisoner; he who had illegally, in an improvised court of country farmers, fastened the stigma of a horse-thief upon a respectable young man, who had since suffered still more deeply from the persecution of these enemies. The prisoner, remarked the attorney, was a student and personal friend of Mr. Daviess—it was natural that he should say what he could in his defense, which was little enough, etc.

When the judge charged the jury, it was evident from the substance of the charge that he had changed his mind completely with regard to the guilt of the prisoner. He instructed the jury very plainly that the prisoner was guilty of an assault with an attempt to kill, but that the circumstances of the case were such as to render the act a justifiable one. When the jury retired to their room, there was very little doubt of a speedy and favorable verdict; the court adjourned, to partake of a long-deferred dinner, it being now nine of the evening; and the crowd of spectators dispersed to perform the same duty.

There were persons, lately anxious for the very life of young Wood, who now came to Jo Daviess to ask him to go and get out a writ for the arrest of Daniel Smith, believing that he would leave for parts unknown, should Wood be acquitted; but the great lawyer was now enjoying a gay repast with the judge and some of the first citizens of Lexington, and would not be troubled any further in the matter.

It was curious that Squire Ringgold, who had attended the trial constantly, was almost the only person whose opinion did not waver. Such an influence had the wily fascinations of Smith gained over his mind, that, had he been convicted in open court of the abduction of his daughter, he would not have believed it. His was one of those stubborn and unreasoning natures, so hard to deal with. He had made up his mind that William Wood was bound to have his daughter, by fair means or foul; and he was equally bound that he should not have her. All his ideas radiated out in a circle from that one point. That evening he took supper with Daniel Smith, who, for reasons of his own, was in high spirits. *He* did not feel any apprehensions as to the conclusions of the jury.

Hour after hour passed without notification from that body of men; it was long past midnight when the nodding judge concluded to go to bed and await the expected verdict in the

patience of sleep. He was allowed to finish his slumbers, arise and breakfast, without interruption. Then he was summoned to take his place on the bench to hear the verdict of the jury. At that early hour not many people were in attendance—only those personally interested, or who happened to be in the vicinity of the court-room. The jury entered court and filed into their seats.

"What is your verdict?" asked the judge.

"We have agreed to disagree," replied the foreman.

"It is just as I expected," exclaimed Jo Daviess, springing to his feet; "there are three men on that jury hired by Dan Smith to convict the prisoner. I picked them out yesterday, each one of the three. Judge, you might as well allow them to be discharged; they are unfit to serve."

Smith was in court, and heard this assertion of the lawyer. He turned red and pale but had not the courage to speak.

"That Daviess beats the devil," he muttered to himself. "I shall not feel quite safe until this affair is over."

"How does the jury stand?" asked the judge.

"Nine for assault and battery, and three for assault with attempt to murder," replied the foreman.

After some discussion, pro and con, it was resolved to discharge the jury. As soon as they were discharged, nine of these men expressed themselves freely as of the opinion that Jo Daviess' assertion was true. The three men who had held out, and who expected to make the others give in, were persons in the interest of the band of desperadoes. Neither Daniel Smith nor themselves had calculated upon such firm determination on the part of the other nine.

CHAPTER XI.

NEW WITNESSES.

IT was extremely provoking to have to go over the whole proceeding again, but it had to be done. The counsel for the defendant was eager to finish up the business, as time was precious to him; but Smith asked and obtained a delay of one day, to obtain testimony of the greatest importance, which he had recently understood could be procured. This gave a fresh impetus to curiosity; Daviess himself thought there might be something in it worth attending to. In the mean time a more reliable jury was impaneled, though there was no certainty then but that black sheep might be in it. Society in those days

was of the most heterogeneous description, mixed through and through, with no assurance that some of the worst material was not at the top.

The trial had proceeded as at the first, until the time arrived for Smith to bring on his new witness. Imagine the sensation produced in the court-room, when Sallie Ringgold was conveyed into the witness-box! The news spread like wild-fire; every man, woman and child in the town of Lexington who was able to walk was soon gathered in the vicinity of the court-house. Within, the scene beggared description. The shawl which was wrapped about her head and shoulders fell off as she entered the box; she wore the brown merino dress she had worn upon that December afternoon when she had disappeared from her friends, the worse for wear, now, but all the more interesting for that. She cast a startled glance around upon the assemblage, until her eyes met those of her lover, William Wood, who had arisen to his feet, and now uplifted his hands while he uttered a fervent "Thank God!" which thrilled the assemblage like an electric shock. It was impossible to counterfeit that burst of genuine emotion—it was a witness whose voice had not been bespoken by Daniel Smith.

"My child!"

"Father!"

Squire Ringgold passed through the crowd and folded his daughter to his heart; a moment they wept together in silence; then cheer after cheer burst from the assemblage, and was caught up by those without. It was one of those moments when every barrier is swept away, and the hearts of humanity beat as if all were but one. As yet no circumstance of her disappearance or return was known; it was enough that the young girl lived, and was about to be restored to her friends. The community had shared, with intensest sympathy, the parents' loss; now they shared in their joy.

When the first whirl of excitement had subsided, there was an opportunity for her friends to observe the change which nearly three months' absence had wrought. That she had suffered severely, her countenance attested; it was worn with illness and anxiety; her form was fragile; her beautiful hair had been shorn, and now curled about her head in a wreath of short ringlets. She was lovely still—lovely enough to make every manly eye which gazed at her prompt the heart to swear vengeance upon those who had wrought the paleness of her cheeks, and that look in her eyes, as if they had shed many tears.

There had entered the court with her, and were waiting to take their places in the box, a negro man and woman, unknown to any person present, but of such peculiar appearance, and

dressed in so singular a manner as would have attracted unbounded attention, had not a greater surprise preceded them.

The minds of the defendant and his lawyer were in a state of bewilderment. Both of them had heard enough of Bill Longlegs' adventure in the forest, and his finding Sallie, to recognize in these persons the runaway negroes who inhabited the Kettle-hill cabin. What the plaintiff should hope to make by the testimony of these three, was a mystery. They were the very persons one would suppose him most anxious to keep out of the way. As for Will, he sat and stared at Sallie, without much attempt to straighten his thoughts. To see her, hear her voice, to know her alive, absorbed all his faculties; the eager look of love he fixed steadily upon her betrayed his heart to every spectator. But about her—when her glances met his, she seemed to feel doubt and restraint; her eyes would droop; the color would rise and recede in her face; there was some influence at work which prevented her answering the signs of his love.

"It is the presence of strangers," thought the lover, refusing to believe that her feelings had changed during their enforced parting.

Jo Daviess was not very long left in doubt of the object of Smith in bringing Miss Ringgold upon the stand. We will not weary the reader by giving in detail all the questions, cross-questions and answers elicited. The amount of her testimony was this: that she had been taken up on the road on her way home from the widow Wood's, on the evening of the 16th of December, by a couple of strange men, who had carried her off in a wagon. Her account of subsequent events up to the time of Bill Mixon's visiting the negro cabin corresponded precisely with the account of which we are already aware. She said these men *represented* to her that they were acting under instructions from Daniel Smith; and her tone, as she slightly emphasized the word, conveyed the very impression which the questions of the district attorney sought to make; that she *then* believed them to be so. She was asked by lawyer Daviess if she would recognize her abductors, were they brought before her; but replied it was doubtful, as she saw them only by night, with their faces masked, and their voices evidently disguised. So far it would seem as if every word made against Daniel Smith; but when she came to be questioned about Bill Mixon's first and second visit, the purpose of the plaintiff began to come out.

Question. If Bill Mixon discovered her, what reason did he give her for not conveying her to her distracted mother, and not coming forward, at once, with his story, to the community?

Answer. He had said to her that he was mad at the way the

squire and her mother had treated him, and that it would end better for William Wood if she consented to remain where she was for the present.

Q. Why did you not induce your negro friends to conduct you here, if you had any reason to be suspicious of the real purposes of Bill Mixon?

A. I had no suspicions. I was extremely anxious to get home; but at first was too feeble from illness; then I waited a few days to hear from Bill; as he did not come, I had just made up my mind to get Sampson to go with me to my father's, when, one wild, stormy night, three men came suddenly into the cabin while Sampson was looking for his cow and carried me forcibly away again.

Q. Were they the same men as before?

A. I think two of them were.

Q. To what place did they convey you?

A. I do not know the locality; I have no idea of it. The night was very dark. I heard Sampson in pursuit, and screamed to him in hopes of keeping him on our track. Once we passed a house, with lights in the window. I screamed as loudly as I could; several men came out, and seemed to attempt to overtake us, but my abductors took to the woods and evaded them. It was nearly morning when they stopped before a small frame house, standing by itself near a road which appeared to be very little traveled.

Q. Did these men have any conversation with you?

A. I do not know if you could call it conversation. I begged of them to let me go.

Q. What reply did they make?

A. They said that they were acting under Bill Mixon's orders. They asked me if he was not a friend of mine. I said I supposed him to be such. They said then, not to be frightened, for he had directed them where to take me.

Q. Did you believe them?

A. I thought it barely possible that he might be carrying out some plan, which would prove for the best, as I know he had odd ways. I was not satisfied; I was very much alarmed.

Q. Did they say any thing about Daniel Smith?

A. Yes.

Q. What did they say?

A. (Reluctantly, and with a glance at the prisoner.) They said that he had nothing to do with my being carried away from home; that they had told me that story to prejudice me against him; that they had been told to do it by the person who had hired them to convey me away—Bill Mixon.

Q. (By the counsel for defendant.) Had you any more reason to believe the last than the first?

A. No; I believe not.

Q. What did they do with you after they arrived before the house?

A. They conveyed me in. The woman who occupied it seemed to expect me. She said, "Is this the young lady?" and then showed them the room prepared for me.

Q. Did she confine you as a prisoner?

A. She did.

Q. To what extent?

A. My room was a half-story room finished off in the attic. There was one window, which had three iron bars across the inside. The door was kept locked. My food was brought to my room. There was a "drum," supplied with hot air from the room below, which warmed my apartment.

Q. Were you kindly treated?

A. I had very good food and a decent bed; I was confined entirely to my room; I had no way of passing the time, except to endure it. My health suffered.

Q. Do you know the name of the woman who acted as your jailer?

A. She called herself Bridget; I never heard any other name.

Q. Did she talk much with you?

A. She talked to me at times.

Q. Did she say why you were there, and upon whose orders she was acting?

A. (With evident reluctance.) She said that a young man, to whom she was under obligations, had hired her to keep me until he was ready to come after me. That I must not fret, for he was a young man of whom I had a high opinion.

Q. Did she say what his purpose was?

A. (Blushing violently.) Yes.

Q. What did she say it was?

A. To marry me.

Q. Who did she say it was?

A. William Wood.

Q. (By defendant's counsel.) Had you any reason to believe her?

A. I did not believe her at first. I told her such a thing was absurd, for I was engaged to William Wood, and would have married him whenever he was ready, without any such trouble as this.

Q. What did she say to that?

A. She said he had told her all about it; that my parents would not consent to the match; that he meant to punish them, and make them feel so bad that they would be glad to take me back, and him with me.

Q. (*By defendant's counsel.*) Had you any other reason, than her word, to believe this story?

A. I had no other reason. I did not believe it. I thought that some other person was doing this, from some motive that I could not understand—that is, at first.

Q. What caused you to change your mind?

A. I did not say that I had changed my mind.

Q. You implied it. Did you afterward have cause to change your mind?

A. I received some letters.

Q. Who from?

A. William Wood.

Q. Who brought them?

A. I do not know. Bridget said that Bill Mixon brought them.

Q. (*By defendant's counsel.*) Did you see Bill Mixon at any of those times?

A. No. Except that once I saw him in the road, about dark, reconnoitering the house. I made a signal to him from the window, to which he replied, "Wait twenty-four hours," but I did not see him after that.

Q. (*By defendant's counsel.*) Do you think it probable that those letters were forgeries?

The witness again hesitated; she looked at the prisoner, whose eyes were fixed full upon hers, faltered, and burst into tears. The next moment she recovered herself.

A. If William Wood should say that he did not write them, I would believe him.

Q. That is not an admissible answer, (said the counsel for the plaintiff.) Did you believe at the time that he wrote them?

A. I thought so.

Q. Did he mention in those letters, his reason for his strange conduct?

A. He said that he had not intended to make me so much trouble. That a little difficulty had occurred while he was keeping him in prison at present; but as soon as he was released he would consummate our marriage. Having gone so far, he did not think he could back out now; but hoped I would forgive him—it was his affection for me which had first prompted him to take me off. He had not foreseen so much delay.

Q. Under such circumstances, did you intend to marry him when he came for you?

The red blood rushed up into the young girl's cheeks, her eyes flashed with something of her old spirit, as she answered decisively:

A. That, sir, is none of your business.

Q. Have you those letters with you?

A. I have them.

Upon being told to produce them, Sallie drew a small packet of three letters from her pocket, which were examined by two or three persons familiar with Will's handwriting, and were sworn to be his. The jailer of the Lexington prison was then examined, and confessed, that once, to his knowledge, Bill Mixon had had access to the prisoner, having visited him in disguise.

The negress was then called to the witness-box, and made a quaint but impressive picture, as she stood there, tall, dark and queenly, as majestic in her fawn-skin tunic as if she wore the imperial purple.

"Do you know the nature of an oath?" asked the clerk of the court.

"I know de Bible tells us we mus'n' lie, an' I shan' do it fer nobody," she replied, with emphasis.

All that was elicited from her was a repetition of the adventures at the cabin—the fact that Bill Mixon had been there, had seemed very kind to the girl, and had promised to take her away, but had not done it. The defendant's lawyer, seeing the shape the matter was taking, made as much as possible out of the evident joy of the hunter, at discovering the lost young lady; but as he would have expressed himself the same after her escape to the woods and consequent danger from cold and wild animals, had he been the means of getting her away from her home, the lawyer was able to make very little of that point.

The negro was questioned and cross-questioned closely about the abduction of the young lady from his cabin; but as he, at no time, was near enough to her kidnappers to recognize them had he known them, he could not testify as to whether Bill Mixon was the third one or not. But he was very emphatic in giving the court to understand that in his opinion, Bill had had no hand in the disgraceful proceeding.

"Yer may fine me as much as yer like. Guess ye'll have to take yer pay out in b'ar's grease and deer-skins! Ef yer should shet me up in jail a year, I'd say what I think about Mr. Mixon. It jest cl'ar broke his heart to have Miss Sallie toted away ag'in. He come to my cabin 'bout a week arter, and said he hadn' found her *yit*, but he *would* track her, if they'd hid her on de norf pole—and dat's de las' we's seen of him, but I s'peckt he's lookin' fur her *yit*. *No sah!* he wusn't de man to do a mean act like dat. I knows him well. He give me my gun dat I's been wantin' ten year. Dar' was nothin' mean 'bout him—*no sah!* I'll sw'ar it fas' on de Bible!"

But Sampson's energetic defense of the ranger was not of

much account in the law, which asks for facts and not opinions; and though the latter may sometimes come much nearer the truth than an appearance of the former, they are not received as evidence. It furnished the occasion for a pleasant jest on the part of the district-attorney, that to the mind of Sampson, the circumstances that the ranger had made him a present of a gun was *de facto* evidence that he hadn't run away with a young lady!

The coloring which the plaintiff's counsel gave the visit of Bill Mixon to the cabin, being out on a *pretended* search for Miss Ringgold, was that it was only one act in the drama of deception so boldly plotted and played by William Wood and his confederate. Jo Daviess watched, coolly and attentively, the new aspect of the case, not even cross-questioning the witnesses to any great extent, but gathering together on the mental battle-field forces equal to the emergency. He let the enemy skirmish audaciously, in the attempt to draw him out in order to discover where his lines of defense might be.

The court-room was destined to a second surprise that day, which was only surpassed by the first. As the testimony was about drawing to a close, a man squeezed his way through the crowd to the side of Jo Daviess and whispered a moment in his ear. Mr. Daviess in turn whispered to the clerk, and presently the crier called out, "Bill Mixon!" and immediately thereafter the long, gaunt, queer figure of the hunter appeared in the room, ebowing his way to the witness-box. Daniel Smith had one of those faces formed for deception, but he turned visibly pale, or rather greenish-white, when this new apparition rose up before him at this inopportune time and place. None who had ever seen the long-legged hunter, but recognized him instantly, as he towered up in the box; and curiosity was intensely alive to know the meaning of the linen bandage about his forehead and the sling in which he carried his left arm.

He was sworn by the clerk, but when the lawyers began to put questions, he broke forth in that high, thin voice which was one of his characteristics:

"I hope, judge, you won't let 'em worry me with questings. I don't mean no disrespeck to the court, and I'll sw'ar by the holy book to every word I speak; but a set of lawyers asking me questings make me feel like a b'ar worried by the dogs. I can't stand it, and fur fear I box their ears with one o' my paws, they'd best not come too nigh. Didn't expect to see me *here*, did ye, yer blasted painter yer?"—directing his eyes to Dan Smith—"but you've got yerself in the trap at last. *I knew* I'd trap ye, sooner or later. Bill Mixon never give up to a catamount yet, and he don't intend ter. Yes, judge, I'll stick to the p'nt, but when I see him, sittin' thar' so slick and

quiet as a cat, my feelin's get the upper hands. The night that girl was took away from Sampson's cabin I was setting in the bar-room to Thompson's tavern—I've got two men as was thar' that night as will prove it—thar' waitin' now. I was on my way to see Miss Ringgold, when the storm come up so furce, I thought I'd wait till mornin'. I was dressed in a pair of long boots and a blue overcoat, like an eastern traveler, for I knew Dan Smith's men was out arter me, and tryin' to track Miss Sallie, and I thought it best to be a little cautious. She screamed when they took her by the house, and I started after her, with a lot of the company to the tavern, and I seen Sampson, with the deer's horns on, which he wears when he wants to skeer folks, was out; but it was so pesky dark I couldn't keep in company with him. Most of the folks got tired and went back to the tavern, but I kept on till I lost sight of Sampson, the girl, and all. Fortunately it lightened occasionally, and durin' a flash, I seen 'em ag'in, where they'd struck inter the woods; by that time Sampson was off the track entirely. Wal, when they'd got in the woods they'd no idea they was watched any longer and they opened a dark lantern to see the way, which was only a rough track which would a-been hard to keep in the daytime, and I follererd after as near to 'em, all night, as I am now to yonder wall. I heard all the blasted lies they told Miss Sallie about its bein' me which sot 'em on. I'd snatched my gun as I run out o' the tavern, but they was three to one—I didn't care a cuss for that, but when I got a fair aim, I up with my old rifle and I'll be darned ef the rain hadn't wet my old flint-lock so's she wouldn't go off at all! I was in a purty kettle o' fish fur I'd jest lent my knife to a feller at the tavern to cut a plug of tobacco, when we hearn the scream, so I hadn't any thing to work with. I knew they was well armed; an' thar' was nothing for me to do but foller 'em and see whar' they took the girl. I seen the house they took her too. It was gettin' to be daylight then. I stayed about and watched all that day. The men went off right away; I didn't think it was best to go to the house without any wepings, so I sot in a tree, cleaning my old rifle and drying her out, but nary a bit of powder had I about me, and I thought quite likely the place would be watched fur awhile—so I concluded to trudge back to some place whar' I could lay in a supply. I got back in three or four days, and I seen a feller onloading some provisions from a horse, and givin' the woman a letter. Arter he was well out o' sight, I ventured out into the cl'ared field, and I got in front of the house and seen Miss Sallie at the winder. She put her ear up to the bars and I hollered *low* that I'd get her out o' thar' in less'n a day. I intended to take the old woman by

surprise that night, and ef she said a word, to knock her in the head! I thought it best to wait till about ten o'clock, then go up and rap, and pretend I was a traveler and had got lost. If she wouldn't let me in, I was *gwine in anyway*. But for onces in his life Bill Mixon got hisself in a fix. I was back in the woods, eatin' a bit o' dried venison behind a tree, en-knowing to thar' being anybody on my track—which is the cur'us part of the thing, that I shouldn't have pricked my ears up—when, bang! suthin' hit me in the head, or jaw an' I didn't know nothin' fur some time. When I come to, what d'ye s'pose I found was going on?—a moughty pleasant pur-ceeding! Ef you want a man to feel a cold streak goin' up his back, let him wake up and find hisself on the ground of a dark night, so near bled to death that he hain't no strength, and a couple o' stout fellers workin' away by the light of a lantern *diggin' his grave!* Yes, judge, I'm sw'aring to this yon know. They acti'~~ly~~ dug my grave, and they actilly *buried me!* I don't wonder Dan Smith turned green when he see'd me come into this court, for accordin' to *common* calkilation I ought to be a-helpin' the old feller down below to get the fires ready fur roastin' him fur about three weeks now.

"As I lay thar', while they dug away and talked, I kept up a mighty thinkin', as the wise owl did, but I didn't say any thing. I diskivered they considered me dead, and that they was in a great hurry to get through burying me; they said Smith would set 'em up well in life for the job; he'd promised to turn over the counterfeitin' apparatus and interest to 'em at Maysville, if they'd make sure work of it; that he was drefful sot to get me out of the way, 'kase he didn't like the way I had of peeking 'round. Now you jest shet up, Mr. Attorney; I'm giving my testimony my own way, an' I don't want to be bothered. I *shan't* stop, I reckon, till I get ready. Wal, I reflected, if they was in a hurry, and hadn't any thing but their knives and a broken-down spade to operate with, they wouldn't dig the grave very deep, and I'd ruther take my chance o' getting out o' that than of their mercy, if they found out I wasn't dead. So I kept as still as a sleeping chipmunk; I let 'em roll me in, and cover me up. I'm free to confess, judge, that war' *ruther* an onpleasant five minutes I spent! How I stood it I don't know. They covered my feet and body fust; and while they was plastering the dirt over my head, I felt the most perikelerly peculiar. My senses e'na'most left me, but I kept 'em enough to know when they'd turned their backs and was walking off; then if I didn't raise up, as if the day of judgment had come, you needn't believe me! I jest broke loose enough to get a breathin'-hole, and then I lay back and kept dark till they was far enough out

o'sig!it and hearin'. I didn't ventur' out for some time. When I did I found myself not very well able to take car' of myself. I could jest crawl, I'd lost so much blood. I took off my under shirt and tore it up, and tied a piece around my forrid, and wound a bandage around my arm, and then I went along on al fours, like a sick b'ar, I hardly know whar'—anywhar' to get out o' *that* vicinity. They'd carried off my gun, but I had a knife in my belt, in case I met anything ugly. I crawled along for a few miles and then crept inter a fallen tree and took a leep."

"I was drefful thirsty, and I wanted some water, but I couldn't find any till nearly noon the next day. I was quite feverish by that time. I thought I knew whar' some friends of mine lived, nigh the Bottom road, ef I could find 'em before my strength give out; and that afternoon I got to their cabin. They nursed me up good, but I had to lay up ag'in my will; and I don't believe I should 'ave been off yit, if I hadn't known court sot this week, and I wanted *to be thair'.*"

"I didn't expeck to find Miss Sallie here, but I did expeck to tell the court whar' it would find her. And I've got a lot of other news, too, if the court wants it. Ef it'll jest send a warrant after Mrs. Bridget quick enough, before them sellers gets the wink, they'll find a lot of counterfeit money, and the fixin's for makin' it, in her house, and they'll find proof enough to show that Dan Smith stands to the head of the affair. An' I can set 'em on the track of a similar affair up to Maysville. An' if anybody wants to hold me till these things is proved, they're welcome. I've spent considerable time, this winter, a settin' *various* traps for that varmint, and he's fast enough now, ef you'll trouble yourselves to look up the evidence; and I don't object to staying around a spell longer. The men who rode off the square's hosses, after Dan Smith rode them out to whar' they were in waitin', are now in Harrison county jail, and they'll tell who brought 'em the hosses ef they're asked. Those was nice hosses, and I'm glad the square lost 'em, for the way he treated me has been outrageous. He don't know enough to tell who his friends is—I beg yer parding, Miss Sallie, but I an't ~~lip~~ it. If yer mother and father hadn't been so sot arter that rascal, 'kase he'd got a finer coat than Will Wood, yer troubles would a' been over long ago. And now all I asks is for this court to send to the places I've spoken about, and see what turns up. Much obligeed to ye, judge, for lettin' Bill Longlegs tell his story his own way, without being barked at and worried by a paek o' lawyers. No disrespeck to *you*, Square Daviess—yer a gentleman and a scholar, and can shoot a deer on the run high about as sartain as Long Bill hisself;" and with this highest of compliments to the lawyer he so much

admired, he was about to back out and shake hands with Will Wood.

But he was not to escape so easily from the "worrying" which he deprecated. There was a frantic effort made to represent him as an incompetent witness; it being asserted that he was an accomplice of the prisoner. There had been something in his odd manners, and his determination to have his own way, which had impelled the court to let him run on till the thread of his story was unwound; but now followed a jerking and twitching, and picking to pieces of the thread, which put him out of humor. All efforts failed to entangle him; and the result was that the case was deferred to allow time to bring forward the evidence which he had pointed out. In the mean time the judge ordered Daniel Smith under arrest, fearing, from some indications which he saw, that Dan would flee the country. Jo Daviess had with him the former confession of Dan, which he now placed in competent hands, and which was the means, taken in conjunction with the revelations of Bill Mixon, of bringing forward an overwhelming mass of testimony, which not only caused the jury to bring in a verdict of assault and battery against Will Wood, and the judge to fine him six cents therefor, but which resulted in five or six indictments being made out against Daniel Smith for horse-thieving, forging, counterfeiting, etc.

This total revolution of the wheel continued the excitement in the community. There was plenty of money and legal skill used in the defense of the fallen representative of the F. F's, but for once, justice was too powerfully armed to be defeated. Many who would have come forward with perjuries as base as their own counterfeit coin, now kept wisely in the background, afraid to draw attention to their own acts as friends of a person in such bad repute.

On the day of Sallie's reappearance, Squire Ringgold, the moment he was released from court, started off on horseback, full speed, after his wife; for Sallie, warmly as she desired to see her mother, absolutely refused to leave Lexington until she had an interview with her lover, and until the case was decided in which his welfare was concerned.

"You was always a willful chit," said the squire, pinching her pale cheeks till the roses came out, "and I s'pose I must humor you this time."

It was not very likely that he was going to refuse her much on this day of her return to him, as it were, from the dead, and the girl knew it. She meant, now or never, to have her way, in one matter at least.

"I know I'm willful, father," she said, with a pretty sauciness, which made her look more like the Sallie of old, "and I

don't wonder at it. 'What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.' Just think, father, if you had had your way, what a bad way it would have been!"

And now a word as to the seeming audacity of Daniel Smith in bringing Sallie into court, as he did. At the first, he had not intended to do so; the letters he had forged to her had been written with the purpose of convincing her that Wood was her abductor, and turning her feelings against him; so that when he, Dan, was ready to seem to find and liberate her, he would stand a better chance of winning her consent to a marriage. But when the case threatened to go against him, he, emboldened by the impunity with which he had deceived in this matter, resolved to pretend that his friends, working in his behalf, had discovered her, and brought her into court to testify as to who her persecutor really was. He had been told of the success of the forged letters, which were so perfect in chirography and style as to deceive the young girl, who still battled in her own mind between love for her lover, and scorn for the course he had pursued. He knew that she would have to affirm that her abductors had told her they were instigated by Bill Mixon, who, being, as he thought, forever removed from giving his testimony, would make no further trouble. In this manner he expected to overwhelm the defense; then, William Wood sentenced to years in the penitentiary, he would have the way clear for reconciling Sallie to a "change of heart." But, as Bill worded it, "the painter had been caught in the trap he set." It proved a trap from which he could not extricate himself; the same court, before the term ended, sentenced him to ten years' imprisonment for the various crimes of which he was convicted.

Will Wood finished the study of the law under Jo Daviess. That he then married Sallie, we may well suppose. The squire gave them one of the "tallest" weddings ever heard of in Bourbon county. When the young couple went to housekeeping, they persuaded Dinah and Sampson to become their well-paid and much-loved servitors. Bill Mixon, content with his greatest "trapping expedition," in which he had caught "that catamount," returned to his hunting life with renewed spirits; but whenever he wanted to "lay off" on a sick day, or a holiday a certain fireside corner always was waiting for him.

THE END.

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